



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

MAUD BLACKSTONE
THE
MILLIONAIRE'S DAUGHTER
BY
RAY. R. JOHNSTON





Harvard College Library

FROM

Walter B. Briggs

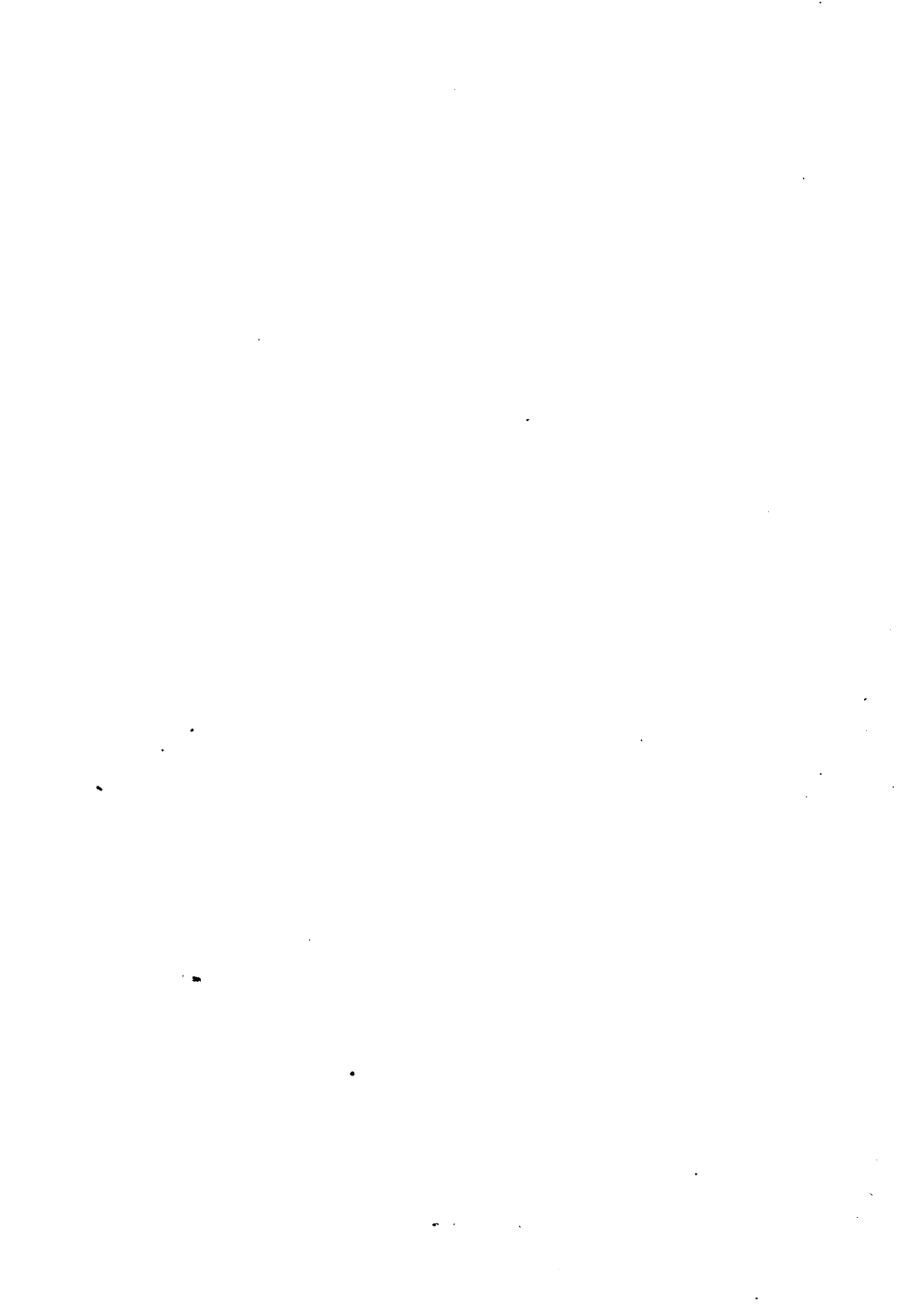
Walter End Mennies

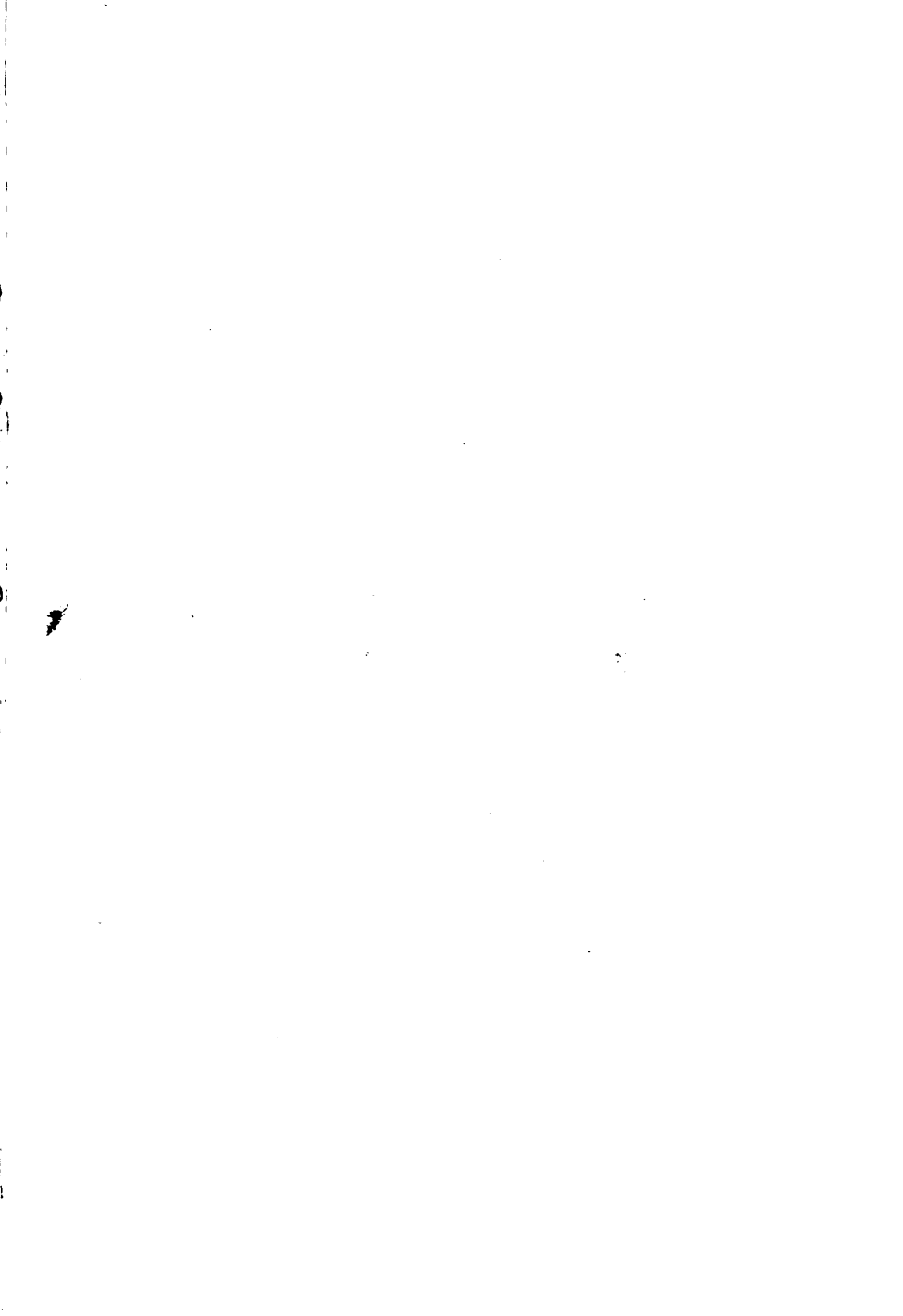
now

Pa En Ma

Los Angeles Cal.

Nov Dec 25-1904







"So this blotted and tender love token
Found a way of its own to its own."

INTEREST
GEORGE'S
ACTION

he, the
Daughter

ION
1914

New York
HARRY COMPANY
1914



A STORY OF THRILLING INTEREST
A CAPTIVATING STORY, VIGOROUS
IN DICTION & EXCITING IN ACTION

D

Maud Blackstone, the Millionaire's Daughter

BY

RAY. R. JOHNSTON

*Author of "A Night of Horror," "The Origin of Man," "A
Sister's Christmas Greeting," "A Sad Christmas Ending,"
"The Two Continents," "A Ship That Sailed without Wind
or Water," "Thoughts of By-Gone Days," "War
of the Rebellion," a poem, "Up-to-date Hades,"
a poem, "Travels Through the Rocky
Mountains," "Travels of a
Ventriloquist," etc., etc.*



Chicago & New York
THE HENNEBERRY COMPANY
Publishers

AL 2165.3.101

✓



Walter B. Briggs

COPYRIGHT, 1901, BY
RAYMOND R. CAREW-JOHNSTON

*All rights in this book, including the rights
of dramatization, recitation, translation, and
the publication of extracts, are strictly reserved.*

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. The Strangers	7
II. An Early Start	11
III. The Terminus of the Cattle Trail	13
IV. The Duel by Moonlight	16
V. The Murder	20
VI. Battle of the Giants	22
VII. Unexpected Tidings	26
VIII. What a Letter Did	31
IX. A Visit to the Money-Lenders	35
X. The Home of the Cattle King	39
XI. The Gambler's Son	43
XII. Returning Evil for Good	46
XIII. The Wolf and the Lamb	49
XIV. The Colonel's Story	53
XV. The Home of the Brigands	58
XVI. Aunt Hagar's Slavery Days	61
XVII. The Mask Thrown Off	66
XVIII. Interview with the Great Detective	70
XIX. Arthur's First Attempt as a Detective	75
XX. The Meeting of Friend and Foe	80
XXI. Another Link in the Detective's Chain	87
XXII. Arthur and the Detective as Street Fakirs	94
XXIII. The Chain Linked Together	102
XXIV. Black Jack's Impatience	108
XXV. Crossing the Missouri River	113
XXVI. The Train Wreckers	117

XXVII.	Robert Discovers Colonel Blackstone among the Wreck	124
XXVIII.	Maud's Escape and Recapture . .	133
XXIX.	In Hot Pursuit of the Robbers . .	137
XXX.	The Retreat Found at Last . . .	144
XXXI.	Larkin's Escape from a Watery Grave	157
XXXII.	Richard Joins the Brotherhood . .	161
XXXIII.	The Mysteries of the Cavern . . .	171
XXXIV.	The Meeting of the Friends . . .	179
XXXV.	The Detective Unfolds His Plans .	185
XXXVI.	Major Parsons, Commandant of Fort Seward	189
XXXVII.	The Invalid Hears Important News	199
XXXVIII.	Hugh Muldoon as a Gambler. . .	203
XXXIX.	Larkin and the Minister	210
XL.	The Minister's Visit to Maud . . .	216
XLI.	The Marriage Ceremony in the Cave	220
XLII.	The Robbers Caged and Surprised .	229
XLIII.	Black Jack's Dying Confession and Request	239
XLIV.	The Outlaw's Confession, continued .	249
XLV.	The Treasure Room of the Brigands .	261
XLVI.	Burial of the Robber Chieftain . .	271
XLVII.	Jim Blakely and his Pard, Shag Andrews, of the Golden Lion, in the Foils of the Government	276
XLVIII.	Father and Daughter Reunited . .	285
XLIX.	The Innocent Deception of the Lovers	293
L.	Colonel Blackstone's Fury—Afterwards Forgiveness	302
Conclusion	306

MAUD BLACKSTONE,

THE

MILLIONAIRE'S DAUGHTER

CHAPTER I

THE STRANGERS

The sun was sinking behind the western horizon as three men drew rein near Beatty's Ford, on the east bank of the Missouri River. The tallest of the trio dropped the bridle rein on his horse's neck, and with a spring as light as a panther, slipped to the ground and began to examine the imprints imbedded in the clay soil near the water's edge. After a careful scrutiny he turned towards his companions, sending forth a peculiar and prolonged whistle as if that which he read in the signs gave him satisfaction.

"I say, chums, the varmints we are arter forded this 'ere stream, not mor'n six hours ago. 'Peers to me when they got on tother side they've made for the old cattle trail, and are now on their way to Baxter ere this. If our horses were not tuckered out with the hard ridin' we put them to since daylight, we might

overhaul them by midnight, but seeing that our animals need rest and nourishment, I propose that we camp here for the night."

His companions giving assent, they dismounted, and after picketing out the horses in the luxuriant and abundant pasturage, growing along the river bank, they next turned their attention to their own appetites. In a twinkling of an eye a large slice of antelope was sizzling and sputtering in the flames; a fire made of floatwood, which was plentifully strewn along the banks of the river.

By the light from the fire we will introduce these three strangers to the reader.

The first was a tall specimen of the backwoods man, six feet in height, massive frame and a very Hercules in strength. His appearance at first glance would intimidate a stranger, having the appearance of the border ruffian of that day. His eyes gave him a wicked and vicious appearance, as they had a tendency to point in opposite directions while looking at an object directly in front. He was dressed in scout's garb of buckskin shirt and breeches, fancifully trimmed with fringe of the same material; wide brimmed hat, that might have been white in its store days. His side arms consisted of a muzzle loading rifle, which he was fond of calling his "trusty Betsy"; two colt, six-shot, 44 calibre frontier revolvers and a ponderous bowie knife peeped out from beneath the belt around his waist.

He was of nature's noblemen, respected and honored by the settlers and feared by the Indians and

border ruffians; but no nobler heart ever beat beneath a soiled buckskin shirt than did that of the famous scout, Squint-eyed Bob, a name that was known both far and near.

The second was a man of middle age, who might have been mistaken for a Frenchman, but for his irrepressible rich brogue which proclaimed him a son of the Emerald Isle.

Hugh Muldoon (for this was the name of our Irish friend) was well gifted with nature's best offering; a strong constitution, and a person that seemed well fitted to stand the rough usages of western life.

Muldoon was the scout's inseparable companion ever since the day Bob rescued him from a band of horse thieves, who were about to leave him a prey to the turkey buzzards, but for the timely arrival of Squint-eyed Bob and a small band of Texan Rangers, who made it too lively for the thieves, and saved Hugh from falling a victim to these merciless monsters, and from that time forth Hugh swore eternal friendship to his lord and master, Squint-eyed Bob.

The third and last of this trio was a handsome youngster, not more than twenty-two years of age; about five feet ten inches in height, with a frame whose supple frame was very deceptive. It was not until one scanned him closely that it was perceived that his chest was deep and broad even though his waist was small.

There was, moreover, a certain jaunty swing to his shoulders and a spring to his step that told of one accustomed to take care of himself. He was a very

fair blonde, and his round innocent face gave him the look of a boy of eighteen, an illusion increased by the curls of his fair hair, which he wore quite long and carefully arranged. It was evident the young stranger was vain of his face and figure, and not without reason, for a handsomer boy than Robert Folsom was hard to find.

But apart from his graces of figure, there was much in his appearance to attract attention, for his dress was decidedly odd, if not outlandish, yet bearing the remains of former splendor and being undeniably picturesque.

It was the rather shabby remnant of the Broadway swell of that period; low crown stiff hat, swallow-tailed coat, double-breasted vest, buttoned to the chin; leg-o'-mutton breeches, and patent leather boots, all seemed much the worse for wear.

Nevertheless, Robert, as his companions called him, seemed to be in trouble, for his countenance, as we make his acquaintance by the fire-light playing on his features, is undergoing a continuous change, as if he were premeditating some desperate thing.

CHAPTER II

AN EARLY START

Early dawn found our three acquaintances of the night before astir. They were not long in getting their horses into camp and preparing their breakfast, which was a repetition of the night's meal, with the addition of a half-dozen black bass taken out of the river by Bob while his comrades were in the land of dreams.

Breakfast over they commenced their journey by fording the river, which was shallow at this point. The Missouri River at the ford ran due east and west and separated Texas from the Indian Nation. Our three friends landed on the north side and drew rein on a rising knoll. Before their vision was a vast plain of rolling prairie land, and as far as the eye could reach, not a tree was visible. Not far from where they stood a band of friendly Cherokee Indians were camped. Bob being conversant with their dialect, proposed that they should ride to the camp, and by so doing, might glean some tidings of those they pursued.

The Indian camp reached, Bob learned that they were out on a hunting expedition, and that the young bucks were led by Chief Antelope, son of Mendota, a noted warrior of the Cherokee nation. Antelope being

a friend of Bob told him that a large party of pale faces with one white squaw accompanied by a black passed them on the trail, about dusk on the afternoon of the day previous, and further on the pale faces separated, the largest party going in the direction of the terminus of the trail at Baxter, Kans., and the smaller going further into the nation, perhaps to visit one of the several tribes of Indians then located on the nation. He was not certain which party the women accompanied.

When they reached the point where the party separated, thinking it likely that the women were taken with the larger party, they followed in their trail. Nothing of note occurred to the hunters during the day, and night found them on the outskirts of Baxter Springs.

CHAPTER III

THE TERMINUS OF THE CATTLE TRAIL

When our three friends reached this small settlement, the streets seemed to be deserted, the stores were closed up for the night, and nothing remained open except the saloons and gambling houses, of which this place had its share, for was not this the Terminus of the Old Texas Cattle Drive, where the lordly cattle king or the gaily bedecked cowboy lost or won a fortune by the turn of a card?

At the time the incidents attending this story took place Baxter Springs was at its zenith, and the lawless had things much their own way, as they do now in many towns in the far west.

On the corner nearest the three friends stood a long wooden building, the ground floor of which was fitted up for a saloon and gambling house. The sounds of mirth and ribalding floated out on the night air from within, claiming the attention of the three friends.

"I say, Bob, I shouldn't wonder but that we may find some of the men we are after in that old hulk there," remarked young Folsom.

"Waal, I reckon, Mister Robert, that you are about half way right thar."

"Be the powers of Dennis O'Rafferty's bagpipes, but

it's meself that is thinking that the haythens we're afther is in that ould inn this blessid minit, drinkin' their poteen as unconcernedly as if Hugh Muldoon, the solid mon, were not out here in the could, with tin foot of rope tied to his saddle horn, to be afther stretchin' the murtherin' cratures wid it. Murther, how could I'm gettin'! It's meself that wouldn't refuse a good bowl of the nice stamin' hot whisky punch that them gossoons bes a drinkin'."

"Hugh, you'll be stretching your own neck before long if you go on in that way," remarked Bob.

"Be jabbers, thin, Master Bob, it'll not be the punch that'll be afther doin' of it, for sorry a dhrop of the swate crature have I tasted since I left Dallas, forty-eight hours agone."

"I have an idea that may be carried out as to whether our enemies are in this gambling den or not."

"Thin spit it out, Masther Robert, for it's meself that's given to ijeas, for me father before me, Lord rest his soul, was the greatest man on ijeas, that there was in all the county Tipperary. It was me mother that used to be afther tellin' me that me father, Lord rest his soul, lost his life by his ijeas. Hould on a minit, and I'll tell ye's about the circumstances of his death, which was such a sore sthroke to me mother and eighteen more of us, as purty a family of bys and girls as you'd find in a day's thravel in all the county of Tipperary.

"Well, to begin about me father's death. He had an ijea that at the bottom of a certain bog——"

"Hold on, now, Hugh, we'll listen to the history of

your father, grandfather and grand-grandfather some other time, when we have more leisure to spare. So bottle up your biographical sketch of the Muldoons if it's worth keeping until some more favorable time," replied the scout.

"As I was going to say before my honest and most respected Irish friend, the Honorable Sir Hugh Muldoon broke in upon me, that——"

"Oh, it's yerself, Mister Robert, that gives me all the honors and titles that's due me, for if me great-grandfather had had his rights, it wouldn't be here you'd find this broth of a boy this blessid minit. I'd be the Honorable the Lord Mayor of Dublin shure. Look at me now, and if I don't look the gentleman in ivery sense of the word thin may the devil fly away wid ye."

"There is surely no gainsaying that Mr. Muldoon is a gentleman, and if anybody within the radius of my voice says that he isn't, we'll have the pleasure of measuring off ten paces, and as there is no one who cares to respond to my challenge, I will finish what I was about to say a few moments ago—that the best thing for us to do, in order to find out if those we are after are inside is for us to stalk boldly in and take our places among the throng without attracting more attention than is necessary," said Robert.

"I think your plan is the most feasible one, and as I answer for my redheaded friend," said the scout, "you have the majority on your side, so come along."

CHAPTER IV

THE DUEL BY MOONLIGHT

As the scout and his friends entered the saloon and gambling house, after tying their horses at the side of a building, and looking well to the priming of their arms, they did not receive more than a passing glance from those near the entrance; so well used were its inmates to seeing new faces and strangers of every nationality and dress, saunter about the streets and saloons every day.

To the right, as they entered, stood the bar, where all kinds of drinks were dispensed by a lantern-jawed six-footer, who no doubt had been a frequent visitor to the eastern prisons, for his physiognomy denoted him a person of sensual habits, and the scars on his face showed that he had seen rough times and scenes. This person was Jim Blakely, or "Scarred Face Jim," as he was familiarly called by his select friends; he was the proprietor of the Golden Lion and president of the Council at Baxter. Several assistants were near him, also dealing out drinks as they were called for, while numerous corps of table-workers were attending to the tables.

At the end of the saloon were tables around which men were seated, some in earnest conversation, others

drinking, playing cards, faro, chuck-a-luck, or doing what best suited their tastes.

At the left, in an alcove, was a rough stage, where singing and dancing was indulged in on off nights by a stock company of negro minstrels.

Hugh Muldoon had not been in the room more than five minutes before he was trying his fortune with a Chinaman. As if to put a clincher on the Chinaman's trickery, Hugh pulled out of his belt the two revolvers and bowie knife, and laying them in a convenient position on the table beside him, called for a whisky punch.

"Now, Mister Chinaman, if yees be afther coming any of yer 'tricks that are dark and ways that are mane,' on me, be jabbers they'll take ye for one of thim same Killkenny cats, for all that'll be left of ye will be yer 'tail,' for the rest of yer body will be a pepper box, and that same I'll thrade off to the bartender for a pint of whisky. Now, Misther Haythun, as ye have the choice of the dale, be kind enough to shove out the pasteboards."

Hugh's foreign phrases soon brought all the idlers that were not interested in games around his table, for they surmised that fun of some kind was likely to brew up between this badly joined pair.

The first game the Chinaman raked in the pot, which amounted to ten dollars, he having four aces and a queen, Hugh having but a pair of kings and eights.

Between the whisky punch and seeing his money go, Hugh began to get warmed up, and it did not take much of a flame to kindle the fighting qualities of Hugh.

Seeing this, the bystanders kept the ire of Hugh up by nudging and winking at him, as if to say, "Look out, he is cheating you!"

Another game was played, and the pot, which amounted to over a hundred dollars, was raked in by the celestial. This last straw was the one that broke the camel's back, and Hugh, now boiling over with white heat, could not control his temper any longer, so jumping from his seat at the table, he reached across and clutched the Chinaman by the throat with his left hand and brandishing his bowie in his right, he cried out:

"Now I have ye, ye murtherin', chatin' blaggard. Does ye suppose for a minit that I, the Honorable Hugh Muldoon, of Tipperary, Ireland, will tamely submit to yees chatin' me out of me last cint, foreninst me own eyes at that too, without as much as even saying boo till yees? Take that, now, as a remembrance of the honor of meetin' me, Mister Chinaman!"

Before Hugh's friends or any of the bystanders could interfere, Hugh, with a dexterous stroke of the bowie, cut the celestial's queue off close to the roots of his hair.

This was too much for the Chinaman, for next to his life he loved his queue. He stood as mute as a statue for a few minutes, and then as a beaming desire for revenge spread over his heretofore immovable features, for the disgrace of loosing the pride of his life, he put his hand under his loose gown and drew forth a murderous-looking weapon in the shape of a large dagger-sword, which might have done good service in

any of our eastern butcher shops for a meat cleaver, and made a dash at Hugh, who was on his guard and jumped to one side, and the man directly behind where Hugh had stood but a moment before received the weapon in his stomach, the sword going completely through him with the impetus of the Chinaman's mad rush. The poor fellow dropped to the floor like a log, at the same time crying out to his comrades for revenge.

CHAPTER V

THE MURDER

The crowd was not slow to take up the dying man's cry, and in a few moments the celestial was caught and securely tied, while a vote was being taken as to what death he should die. Some were for hanging and others for shooting, when one burly fellow who seemed to have more authority than the rest, shouted:

"I say, pards, give the poor devil a chance for his life, I vote to give the Chinaman a bowie and let him fight it out with Irish."

This proposition was met with a hearty "Yes, yes! Let the coppered-colored heathen and the Irishman fight it out," and as this last speaker seemed a sort of leader, and the majority present with him, it is doubtful how it would end with Hugh in the encounter, if Squint-Eyed Bob had not broke in with the remark:

"Now, friends, I've been a spectator to this yer whole affair, and I can't see how as is this yer poor Chinaman galoot can be held accountable for the death of this yer man, as the running of bowie through him was purely accidental on the copper-skin's part, and I for one am in favor of letting him go, as the loss of his queue is enough."

"That yar, stranger, an't according to our gospel in

these parts, and we don't intend to have outsiders chip in, nuther," remarked the leader of the party.

"How will you take your pizen, stranger?" remarked Bob—"with the revolver or bowie?"

"With the revolver, of course," said the leader, who was rather surprised at the quick acceptance of his challenge.

Few words have these men of the western border; they take such matters as if it were a mere child's play.

Both men left the saloon followed by the loungers. A full moon cast its radiance over the scene which was soon to witness the tragic death of one of the participants.

Both the scout and stranger were to stand back to back, and at a given signal, each to step twenty paces, then turn and fire until their revolvers were of no use to them. If neither was killed with the revolvers, they were then to draw bowie knives and close in.

CHAPTER VI

BATTLE OF THE GIANTS

While Squint-Eyed Bob and the leader were talking over the preliminaries of the duel, the crowd increased to several hundreds. Several shouted out to Bob to be careful which way he looked when he fired.

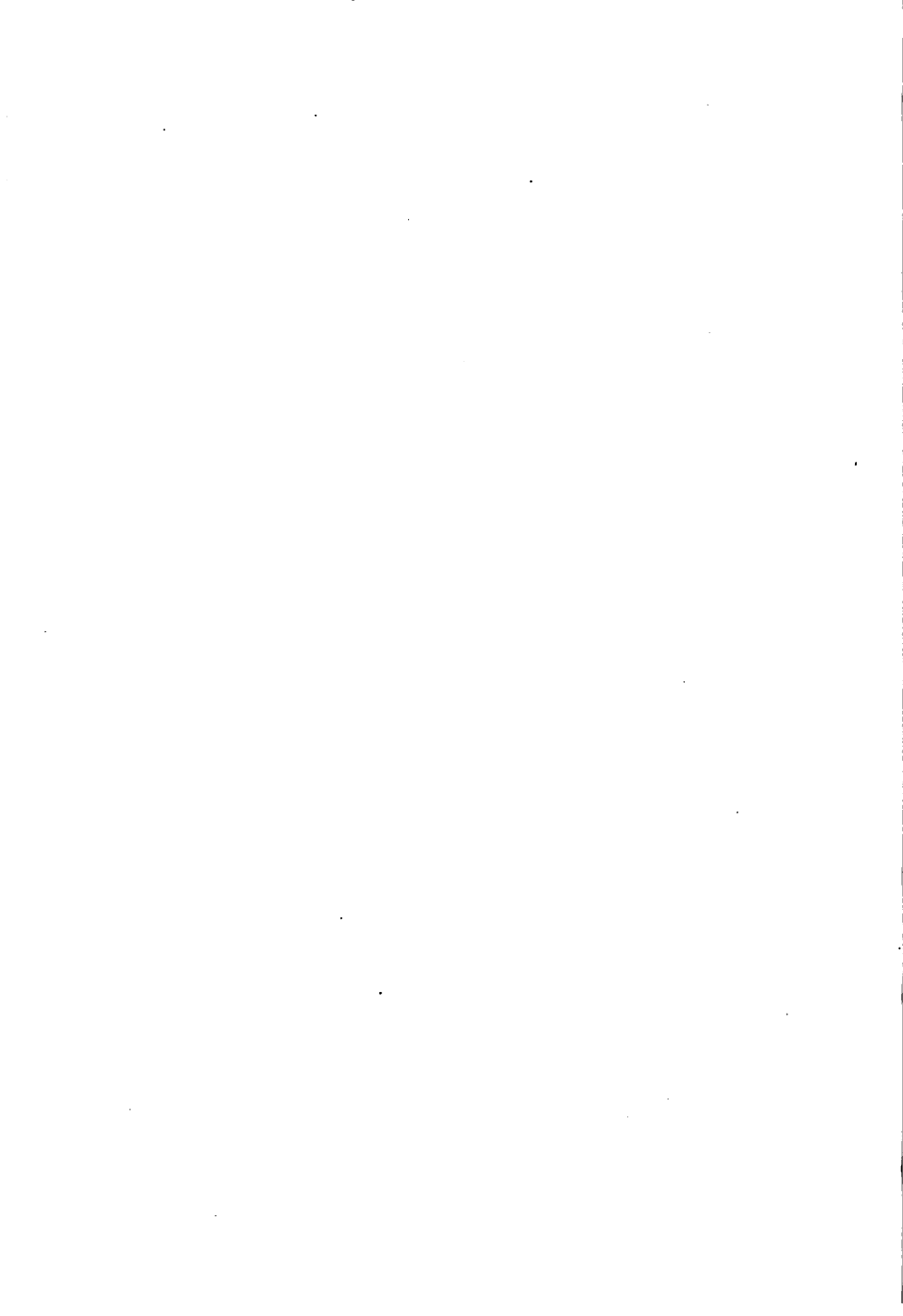
It did not take long for the duelists when the word was given to start to pace off the required distance, and both turned at the same moment and fired. Bob's ball struck the leader in the breast, just above the heart, the leader's ball going wide of its mark. A second discharge was fired, and when the smoke cleared away it was perceived that the leader had received his death wound, his revolver had fallen to the ground, his pistol arm hung down at his side, and he swayed backward and forward for a moment, and at last fell to the earth with a dreadful thud.

When his friends reached his side he was dead, Bob's last ball found its way through the leader's heart, while Bob escaped with only a slight abrasion on the left side of his head.

A tremendous hurrah rent the air at this moment, and one tall specimen of a bushwhacker proposed three cheers and a tiger for the crooked-eyed fellow that did the job up so nicely.



"They both turned and fired at the same time."



Three cheers and a tiger were given with a hearty good will, and they all repaired to the saloon, where Bob proposed to set up the drinks for the crowd.

Some one, more thoughtful than the rest, and bent on more mischief, asked where the Chinaman was, but none could tell. He had made off during the excitement of the fight, and as none were interested enough to look after him, he was allowed to go the even tenor of his way, it is to be hoped, a wiser and better Chinaman.

As they entered the saloon doorway, Robert Folsom, being a few steps in advance, stood as if rooted to the floor, for there, at the bar, stood a tall, dark-featured man, with heavy drooping mustache, dressed in the garb of a plainsman; buckskin leggins and hunting shirt, fancifully trimmed with beads and colored fringe, long dark curling hair hung down his back from under his wide-brimmed felt hat.

The stranger at the bar turned with the well-filled tumbler of liquor in his hand, to see who was coming in, when his eyes encountered the figure of Robert. A deathly pallor overspread his face, the tumbler of liquor fell to the floor as he articulated the name:

"Robert Folsom?" while his hand sought his side for his revolver.

"Yes, Richard Larkin, it is I!"

CHAPTER VII

UNEXPECTED TIDINGS

It is Christmas, the snow is flying in large flakes as a handsome carriage with silver trimmings drove up to Jewett & Root's jewelry establishment, on the main street of the old and flourishing city of Norwich, Conn.

A gentleman wrapped up in a heavy fur overcoat, buttoned to the chin, alights from the carriage and assists a lady, warmly clad in furs, out. All their belongings denoted them persons of wealth, as such they were, for could not Colonel Blackstone count his money by millions? The millionaire and his estimable lady had come for the purpose of purchasing a few costly presents for their only daughter, Maud, who was visiting her cousin in the west, and who was expected to arrive on the 7:30 express that evening.

The purchase was made of a beautiful set of diamonds, consisting of necklace, earrings and brooch.

They were about to step into the carriage when they were accosted by a young man of prepossessing appearance, not over six and twenty years of age; tall and slim, of the brunette type of beauty, short curly hair, small drooping mustache, well waxed. His manner was that of the thorough gentleman, and his expressive countenance was that of a man who was a born leader.

This last personage was Arthur Blackwell, Maud's accepted lover by her parents, and one whom she detested and abhorred with a loathing she could not control.

After the usual friendly greetings between the three personages were over, Arthur Blackwell handed the colonel a sealed letter, bearing the post-mark of a western town, which was immediately opened in a nervous and hurried manner by the colonel.

Colonel Blackstone glanced over the pages, and his face became as white as the snow around him; he gave one gasp, clutched the air for support, and fell heavily forward on the walk with his face buried in the snow, holding the letter in his clenched hand, as in that of the jaws of a vise.

With the help of a policeman, who approached at that moment, Colonel Blackstone was borne to his carriage, and Arthur gave directions to the footman to drive with all speed to the Big Plains, where the colonel's palatial residence was situated, while he went in quest of the family physician.

The colonel was taken to his room immediately on arrival, and all restoratives at command were used to bring him to consciousness, and he was in a fair way to recovery when Arthur and the physician announced their presence.

After a short period the colonel returned to consciousness, and he then explained the cause of his illness by reading the letter, which he still held in his hand, the contents of which his friends were in ignorance of. The letter read:

Fort Scott, Mo., Dec. 19, 1867.

My Dear Brother:—

It is with the deepest pain and regret that I am compelled to pen these sad tidings to you. On last evening, while our niece and your beloved child, Maud, was returning from a social, accompanied by her cousin Alice, they were surrounded by a large number of armed men, and our dear Maud carried off a captive. The whole town is all excitement over the capture and a large force has started out in pursuit of the kidnappers. Thus far no tidings of her or her captors have been brought in by those returning from the pursuit. Come on here at once if you can. Hoping that the good and ever watchful Lord will shield our darling Maud from harm, I remain,

Your affectionate sister,

MRS. MARY A. PRIERLY.

P. S.—3, p. m.—News was just brought in by Squint-Eyed Bob, a well-known scout, that he met a large party of horse thieves on their way to Dallas, Tex., accompanied by a young lady and a colored woman, and from the description given we have every reason to believe that the lady with them was our Maud.

M. A. P.

Mrs. Blackstone was deeply affected by the contents of the letter and broke into hysterics. Her darling daughter a captive in the hands of villainous men and

she not there to shield her was her lament, and it was long before she could be comforted and listen to reason.

Arthur seemed deeply affected by the fate of his fiancée, and indeed it was real on his part now, but less than an hour before he could have wished her at the bottom of the ocean, or anywhere else, so that she would be ever out of his path. The thought of her being in the hands of ruffians made him despise himself for his unmanly wish.

Colonel Blackstone, having rested well from a deep sleep produced by the effects of the opiates administered, and having had time to give the subject of his daughter's capture deep deliberation, called Arthur to his bedside and said:

"Now, Arthur, as I will not be able to go to the rescue of my dear child for a few days, and as the case needs quick and decisive action, the whole matter will have to devolve on you.

"Go to my secretary and take all the money you need for the journey, and be sure and do not spare it; and if you need more at any time draw on me for any amount, but bring back my daughter and your affianced bride safe and you will have a father's blessing.

"Take the first train leaving here to-night for Chicago, and when there go to Allen Pinkerton, the most expert detective in the west, and consult with him. His address you will find on this card.

"Now good-bye and be off, and God speed you on your journey, and that you may be in time to reclaim

our Maud out of the hands of the ruffians before harm befalls her."

The two men clasped hands in silence, and after a long and hearty shake Arthur left the mansion on his way to the rescue.

CHAPTER VIII

WHAT A LETTER DID

In this same city lived another family consisting of three persons, father, mother and an only son, whose circumstances were far from being like that of the millionaire, Colonel Blackstone. They lived in a neat little cottage on the old Providence road, nearly opposite the old shell limekilns. To the left, was a vast forest of some sixty acres, which was commonly known as the Greenville Woods. The cottage stood well back from the road, and surrounding it was a two-acre lot well cultivated. Marketable vegetables seemed to be the products of this model miniature farm, and from its high state of cultivation we should judge that it was a paying investment.

The owner of the cottage and little plot of ground was a cripple, and it was only at certain times that he could leave the house to attend to his garden and take the produce to market.

This was the home of the Folsoms, and Robert, the son, clerked in an extensive dry-goods establishment and was well liked by his employers and his fellow salesmen.

He was honest, upright and courteous, and had steadily advanced since he was promoted from chore boy to salesman.

This young man dared to love beyond his station, for meeting the young heiress, Maud Blackstone, at a social, of which he was an invited guest, he was smitten with her charms. They met frequently after this, and a strong and holy love sprang up between them.

When Maud was getting ready to visit her cousin Alice, residing at Fort Scott, they took it into their young heads that love such as theirs needed to be bound not by mere promises, but in the holy bonds of wedlock, and Robert and Maud were secretly made man and wife before her departure to the west.

But how could this young couple ever expect to conciliate the proud father of Maud, for rather than give his consent to this unequal marriage he would rather have seen his daughter lying dead at his feet.

Two days before Colonel Blackstone received the letter containing the news of his daughter's capture Robert Folsom received one post-marked Dallas, Texas. The writing was as familiar to him as the cloths he had been handling a few moments before. He opened it with the fond expectancy that it contained the welcome news that his beloved had started for home, and that he could soon clasp her to his breast.

But judge of his surprise when, instead of the welcome tidings it should have contained, that she was a prisoner in the hands of an unscrupulous wretch.

The letter read as follows:

Dallas, Texas, Dec. 17, 1867.

Dearest Robert:—

While coming home from a social, given at a friend's house on the eve of my departure for home, we were bowling along the road over the well-packed snow, the tinkle of the sleigh bells resounded on the frosty midnight air, and the gladness in my heart gave out a response to their merry jingle. My cousin Alice and I were talking of my early departure the day following, when, out of the darkness in a lonely part of the road came a band of masked men. They surrounded the sleigh and my cousin fainted. I was lifted out of the sleigh as if I were an infant, and placed on a horse. A tall man fancifully dressed gave orders to the band to make double quick time, he then galloped to the head of the cavalcade, leading my horse alongside of his. By the early light of dawn we drew up before a rude log cabin. I was helped off the horse, sick at heart and suffering greatly from cold and fatigue. I was led into the cabin where I noticed that my captors had been expected from the remarks made. An old negress set about making breakfast, very soon a steaming cup of tea and toast was brought to me, and I was induced by thirst to drink the tea. After partaking sparingly, I was allowed to rest an hour. I could not sleep thinking of my frightful situation, and of you and my father and mother. While in this reverie I heard my name mentioned, and looking up I recognized my captor as Richard Larkin. What he meditates doing with me I am at a loss to say, but I think

by this that he will try to compel me to become his wife. An hour after I was again placed on the horse, and we have been riding all day, never stopping save to eat lunch. We are now camped on the outskirts of a small town, which the old negress who has accompanied us and acts in the capacity of servant to me, assures me that it is Dallas we see in the distance. The negress and two guards are here while the rest of the party have gone on to Dallas. I have bribed the negress to post this letter to you, by giving her my diamond ring, a present from Arthur, so I do not regret parting with it. If this letter reaches you the ring will have done some good. Larkin has not thrown off his disguise in my presence, nor has he spoken to me yet. I would have written to papa, only I wished you, dearest, to have the start of them, for I know you will come and rescue me from this bold, bad man.

We met a scout just before we reached this camp whom I learned was called Squint-Eyed Bob. Go to him; he is a brave man, I am told, and he will guide you to me. Come to my rescue, dearest Robert, come! As in happiness and trouble, ever thine,

MAUD.

CHAPTER IX

"Go, look in the bank, where Mammon has told
His hundreds and thousands of silver and gold;
Where, safe from the hands of the starving and poor,
Lies pile upon pile of the glittering ore;
Walk up to the counter, and there you may stay
Till your limbs shall grow cold, and your hair becomes gray.
And you'll find at the bank not one of the clan
With money to lend to a moneyless man."

Robert was sick at heart when he read the letter through. How could he ever hope to go to the rescue of his darling and punish the vile abductor of his happiness? Where had he, a poor man, the means to go there with, let alone to pay a scout to help him in the search for his lost darling? How he chafed that poverty was such a drawback to him, for with wealth he could have hope and happiness.

"I have it," he said. "I will go to my employer and get leave of absence and see some of my friends. From some one of them I can surely raise enough to bear my expenses so that I can go and rescue my darling."

With this object in view, he went into the office; and Mr. Perkins, his employer, being at his desk, he told him he wished leave of absence for an indefinite period, which was granted.

He went from one friend to another and asked for a loan on interest, which was refused him by one and all when he told them he could give no more security for its payment than his word of honor as a gentleman.

Poor foolish boy! in that half day he learned the first lesson of his life, and found out who and what a friend really was.

Tired and heartsore after his quest to raise the necessary funds for his journey, he went back to the store with the intention of going into the office and letting his employer know that he had given up the intention of going on a vacation, and would be in his place next morning.

Going in, he found the senior partner, Mr. Perkins, sitting at his desk in the same position as he had left him. On Robert's approach he turned around, and noting his woe-begone look, asked him if he were in trouble.

Mr. Perkins' kind manner of addressing him gave him a hope, a ray of sunshine. Dare he lay the facts of his case before his employer and ask him as a last resort to loan him the money? It would only add one more disappointment to the others if he were refused. Yes, he would dare; there was hope in Mr. Perkins' kind fatherly face.

"Yes, Mr. Perkins, I am indeed sorely perplexed and sorely tried. I just received a letter from a very dear friend—I might say, from one whom I love very dearly—stating that she had been seized by a band of ruffians and borne away to their mountain fastness, and begging of me to come to her rescue. I have

been to all my friends, some of whom I had hoped to get the loan from, by paying good interest for its use, but as I could advance them no security other than my word of honor, I was refused."

"Hem, hem—how much do you think you will need on this trip, Robert? That is, have you formed any idea of the amount you will have to expend on this journey? You should look at it in a business point of view."

"No, sir, I have not; but I think two hundred dollars would cover the cost."

"Too cheap, too cheap. I see you have not covered all the cost. You have no idea of the cost of travel in the west. If I should loan you this amount, when could you hope to pay it back again?"

"Just as soon as I could earn it, providing you would take me in your employ again on my return? Father, I know, would not charge me anything for board at home until the sum borrowed was all paid up."

"Well, well, such a steady young man with such good habits as you have should not be denied this little amount; so here is a check for five hundred dollars that I had drawn up for you over an hour ago. I heard your appeal to Mr. Martin, the money-lender, and as I supposed rightly, that you would be disappointed in getting it from him, or the other parties whom he directed you to see, and knowing if that were the case you would come directly here to notify us of your intention of going back to your duties. This is how the check came to be made out in your favor in advance."

"Oh, Mr. Perkins, how can I ever thank you or find words suitable to express the joy your kindness gives me? You shall never regret the trust imposed in me."

"Well, well, never mind now. If you intend to make the next train you will have barely time to reach the bank before closing time. So be off, and good-bye."

"Good-bye, and God bless you, Mr. Perkins, for this new happiness you have given to me."

This is how we come to make Robert Folsom's acquaintance, also that of the scout, Squint-Eyed Bob, and his friend, Hugh Muldoon, in the wilds of the west, while seated before the campfire on the bank of the Missouri River, as given in the opening chapters.

"Robert, from the time he started, never spared himself till he found the scout Squint-Eyed Bob and his friend and enlisted them in his behalf.

CHAPTER X

HOME OF THE CATTLE KING

Maud Blackstone, the heroine of our story, was the only child of Colonel Blackstone, and the reigning belle of both Old and New Norwich, ever since she made her first *debut* into the society of the elite of both cities, of which her wealth, the heiress of millions, entitled her.

Her company was much sought after, not alone for the wealth she would bring with her as her marriage dower to the lucky person, but for her beauty, which was rare, and of a type of the ancient Roman beauties. It is seldom nature distributes her gifts with so lavish a hand, for Maud was blessed with beauty and riches in plenty. Although being beautiful, she was modest and retiring in company, while at home, in the retirement of the home circle, she was all life and the tease of the whole household. Her vivacity and wit was something to be wondered at in one so young, she being but seventeen at the time of her eventful life.

After a fashionable and enjoyable season at Newport, where she was the admired of all the fortune hunters and designing mammas, she accepted an invitation from her cousin, Alice Prierly, then residing in Fort Scott, Kansas.

Mr. Prierly had been an extensive cotton manufac-

turer of Greenville, Conn., when Alice and Maud were both young children, some ten years before these incidents. Reverses in fortune two years after took place on a memorable day to himself and hundreds of his fellow business men, brought him to the verge of bankruptcy. Having a chance to dispose of his business at a sacrifice, and finding no other way out of his difficulties, he saved what he could out of the wreck of his once large fortune and went west to retrieve his fallen fortune.

Raising cattle for the eastern market being then in its infancy, and at that time the main products of the west, Mr. Prierly entered into this new business with increased zeal, and at the time he is brought into notice was one of the largest cattle kings of the prairies.

These cattlemen suffered great annoyance from roving bands of Indians and white renegade thieves that infested the prairies and new settlements of the west.

Cattlemen and settlers banded together and called themselves "The Rangers," which was duly approved by their State governments, every member constituting himself into a vigilance committee and detective, and under their charter no quarter was shown to the culprit detected in any overt act against their laws.

Very often one of the charter members of this same committee was detected by his comrades. A meeting of all the members was called, the guilty party being present, proofs and witnesses were examined by the

judge and jury (consisting of four of the members). If the jury, after examining proofs, and hearing all the evidence relating to the case in hand, found the prisoner guilty or not, a deciding vote of all the members present was then taken. This was done so that one or two members could not avenge himself on another by swearing away the life of an enemy and one of the brotherhood. It required a two-third vote of all the members to convict. If then found guilty, the judge passed sentence, and it was left to this functionary as to what death the culprit should die, and die he should, within an hour after sentence was passed.

Mr. Prierly, from his commanding presence and scholarly qualifications, was chosen by the brotherhood as president. It was due to him that the Texan Rangers were first introduced to public notice. This small band of fearless men were each and every one tried men, men who knew not the word of fear, and each in himself was the equal of a half-dozen ordinary men. The Rangers were mostly composed of young men, who had been reared on the frontier, hardy and tireless, used to scenes of bloodshed and strife. They were officered by an old veteran of Mexican fame, Maj. C. F. Dawes, sleuthhound and Indian and thief hunter.

Is it any wonder, when we know the qualities of the men comprising this band, that their deeds of daring have been handed down to history? That they have done efficient service there is no doubt, for, from time to time, story writers have written about their daring

deeds and escapes, while poets have made them immortal through song.

The Rangers were sustained by constitutional territorial power, and aside from their state allowances were annually voted a good round sum by the cattlemen for services rendered them.

CHAPTER XI

THE GAMBLER'S SON

Maud had not been at her uncle's home more than a week when her company was sought after by her cousin Alice's lady acquaintances, and innumerable parties were given in honor of her visit in their midst. It was while attending one of these and while Maud and her cousin Alice were being driven home, that Maud was taken and spirited away, as given in the opening chapters.

Her captor, Richard Larkin, was her own cousin, his mother, Mrs. Larkin, being a sister to Mrs. Blackstone. Richard's father had been a reckless man, a sporting man by profession, and was killed by a fellow gambler over a dispute over cards while engaged at his favorite game in San Francisco, leaving Mrs. Larkin and Richard, a boy of ten years, in destitute circumstances, and away from friends and relations.

Richard's mother, being too proud to write to her relatives of the death of her husband, whom she loved with an undying affection, and being cast out of their affections on account of the worthless match she contracted with Larkin, suffered rather than ask help for herself and son.

She did everything that an honorable woman could do for the support of herself and son, but not being

brought up to drudgery, her delicate constitution already decayed with consumption, death claimed her one year after as his victim, and was buried beside her husband, whom in life as in death she was not to be parted from.

On her deathbed she enlisted the good doctor who had tended her in her last illness, into her services in behalf of her son, who she knew would soon be left an orphan, and made him promise that he would intercede for Richard for a home in her sister's family, and acquaint her of all the facts of her own and her husband's death, after she was laid to rest, and to beg her sister to forgive her and adopt and rear her boy to a different life than that which her husband followed.

Mrs. Prierly, after receiving the news of her sister's demise from the physician, who in detail followed the last wishes and instructions of the dying woman; adding in glowing terms all that the poor woman and her son had suffered since her miserable marriage, entreating her by the love she once bore her to adopt and educate the son of her once loved and cherished sister. The letter could not fail to melt a harder heart than that of Mrs. Prierly, and acting on the impulse of her emotion she at once sought an interview with her husband, who it may be supposed did not like the idea of taking the son of a gambler and spendthrift into the bosom of his own family, and placing him on a standing with his own children.

His better nature, aided by the entreaties of his good wife, prevailed, and Richard was at once sent for

and was given a home such as he had not known or dreamed of having.

He was made to feel that he was indeed at home by the kind attentions showered upon him, and all that wealth could do to gladden a heart that knew but poverty before was bestowed upon him. He was bright and intelligent for a boy of his years, and owing to the teachings of his mother was far advanced in a scholarly way. In a few years he outstripped his schoolmates, carrying off the prizes that should have gone to older scholars. After graduating at the Norwich University with all the academical honors, while yet very young, he was placed as a freshman at Yale College, New Haven.

CHAPTER XII

RETURNING EVIL FOR GOOD

Up to the time Richard was placed in Yale College, he was considered the soul of honor. He had won a place in the affections of his uncle and aunt, and they counted him as one of themselves. While at college he was not stinted as regards money or clothing. This was Richard's ruin, for if his uncle had been less lavish with his purse he would have saved Richard for himself and an honor to them. His genial good humor, scholarly deportment, and reckless way of spending his allowances soon won to his side a large majority of the junior and senior classes, who were stinted in their allowance by their good parents, who knew what was best for them. Richard was made a lion of, and elected to high positions in clubs of various kinds for the sustaining power that was at his command.

This turned Richard's head, and the instincts inherited from his father, after a two years' course at college, began to crop out. He neglected his studies and the professors, thinking it best, wrote insinuating letters to his uncle, the last of which contained the information that if he did not put a curb on the young man's actions it would be their painful duty, owing to the high standing of their collegiate institution, to expel him. This latter information, as may be sup-

posed, brought a response from Richard's uncle, he coming in person. Richard, learning of the arrival of his uncle, was the first to buttonhole him at the hotel with a bevy of his schoolmates around him.

Richard came well prepared to meet the well-merited rebukes of his uncle. He heard him through, in regard to all the accounts sent to his uncle by the professors; he then called upon his schoolmates to refute the charges. They responded to the request and lauded Richard as the best and brightest scholar in the college.

This avalanche of proof from Richard's own schoolmates deceived Mr. Prierly, and he could not imagine what the professors had against Richard that they should blackmail him in such an unmerited manner, thinking Richard had been belied by some one whose enmity he had incurred, or that for some boyish trick he had played on one of the professors had gained their ill will and were trying to expel him for it; so bidding Richard good-bye, Mr. Prierly took the next outward bound train home.

On reaching home he indited a letter to the professors, in which he said that after due deliberation and a careful examination of all the charges made against his nephew he found no serious cause for the step that they meditated, and hoped that they would overlook this, the first offense against their rules and regulations; that he had an interview with his nephew and he felt confident that Richard would give no further cause for their censure during the rest of his college course.

Richard, after seeing his uncle homeward bound, felt elated that he had so successfully blindfolded the "governor," as he styled his uncle now. He carried himself next day and every day succeeding in such a manner toward his superiors that it brought down upon him the contempt of his professors and the better part of his classmates. Two months after the visit of his uncle he was expelled in disgrace and sent home, the professors sending such an avalanche of proof that Mr. Prierly had no recourse but to submit, as the evidence was too true.

From this on he began to lose caste with his uncle, but hoping if left to himself and away from his former associates he would reform, took him in his employ in the mill and gave him a set of books to keep in his own private office, that he might watch Richard and see for himself if he was the rascal that he was painted at the college.

For two long months Richard was the personification of goodness, and carried himself in a gentlemanly and obliging manner, no work was too hard for him, he was at his work early and late, and all the arduous duties given him by his uncle were performed in a satisfactory manner. He showered his attentions on his uncle in many ways, so that he could not fail to see and appreciate. Thus it was that he again succeeded in hoodwinking his kind benefactor, and Richard, through his cunning and artfulness, was again the trusted and honored guest in the family of the manufacturer.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WOLF AND THE LAMB

At this period of Richard's life, Maud returns home from the Young Ladies' Seminary, at Fort Edward, N. Y. She dawns upon him in all the freshness of youth and beauty, and they being related, Richard claimed it as his due as her cousin to be her escort as often as he could, and having free access to the Blackstone mansion, they were thrown often in each other's society. Colonel Blackstone or his daughter Maud not knowing of Richard's former exploits, and Mr. Prierly not enlightening them, they treated him with every courtesy due to his standing.

Richard fell desperately in love with Maud and the millions that would some day be hers. He made his visits more frequent and continued to press his attentions on her more and more as the days went by, and Maud and her parents, taking them for cousinly affection, failed to see anything in his frequent visits.

One evening as Maud and Richard were sitting in the conservatory discussing the preliminary preparations for a party to be given on her birthday, Richard without any formality seized her hands with the ferocity and the strength of a madman and asked her to be his wife, at a not very distant date. Maud, surprised and alarmed by the action of her cousin, lost all

command of her voice and could not articulate a refusal as she certainly would, and Richard, taking her silence for granted that his love was returned, drew her towards him and kissed her with fervor.

The caresses of Richard brought Maud out of her trance-like state, and her indignant demand to release her on the instant had the effect of cooling Richard's ardor.

"Mr. Larkin, I will not call you cousin Richard, for your ungentlemanly conduct just now forbids me ever again to call you by that endearing title. Heretofore I have respected you and treated you as a dear cousin, but in future, owing to your unwarranted and ungentlemanly actions, I am compelled to treat you as an entire stranger, and forbid you ever to speak to me of love such as you have just now uttered. Furthermore, I wish you to leave me and never show your face to me again."

"Ah, then you love another; but, by all the furies, I will have you in spite of man or devil, and if I can't have you no other will."

Maud, not wishing to ring for help, and fearing that her cousin had suddenly gone deranged, tried to pacify him, and told him that perhaps she had been too hasty and would unsay a part of her hasty words, that she would still regard him as her cousin and treat him as one of her honored guests, but as for giving him other than a cousinly love, he must not expect it of her, if he wished to remain her friend.

This added another coal to the fire already burning in Richard's breast. This disappointment of meeting

with a refusal where he thought he had already won made a demon of him, and he swore by the eternal that, come what may, she would yet be his wife.

His language becoming unbearable, Maud seized the bell rope. Its tinkling had not ceased ere Colonel Blackstone entered the conservatory. Seeing Maud and Richard in such tragic attitudes, he burst out in laughter, remarking:

"Pon my word, the acting is good, and the charades will be a success if you do as well before the audience as you are now doing before me."

"No, father, we are not acting a part as you just now inferred, but in reality, and I could wish it otherwise. Mr. Larkin has forgotten his manhood, and I rang for your presence in order to be relieved of his custody."

"I too, assure you, Colonel Blackstone, that I am not acting a part, for my love for Maud forbids anything of the kind. I just now asked your daughter to be my cherished wife, and she spurns my offer as if I were a beggar suing for alms. I am aware that I cannot give her riches such as you have, but I can give her love that riches cannot buy."

The colonel looked from one to the other, not believing his senses or hearing, so mystified was he at his daughter and nephew's avowal. After coming to himself and realizing the position, he spoke in a very mild but decided manner.

"Mr. Larkin, I regret that this scene took place, and that you forgot your manhood thus far to allow yourself to address my daughter in other terms than those

becoming a gentleman. I have, since your advent among us, entertained the highest opinions of you, and it pains me that I am deceived regarding your character. If you had come to me and told me your love for Maud, this scene would not have taken place to-day, and your name would have still remained on our list of friends. As your avowal of love calls for an explanation on my part to both you and Maud, that I should have made before this, and as you are here, I wish you to hear me through, and then you will know a father's feelings in the matter."

CHAPTER XIV

THE COLONEL'S STORY

"When I commenced my collegiate career I made the acquaintance of a young man of my own age, whose father, before my marriage, gave me the first step to wealth and position through my friendship for his son and a small service I was fortunate in rendering my friend. Our names were very near alike, and whether from this fact or that our natures were the same, we took to each other from the first day we met. We were both sent from different States to the same school, and both being friendless we scraped up an acquaintance.

"George Blackwell, my friend, and I, were inseparable companions; one could not go anywhere without the other, and what one had the other must have. This liking for each other we gave the name of true friendship. This liking became stronger day by day as we grew to manhood, and I, becoming discontented with my bachelor's life, proposed to George that we join the Benedicts and take upon ourselves a wife, both being in fair circumstances to support a wife in a plain and comfortable style at the time. George's father being in business when he became of age, he assigned his business to us, giving me an equal share with his son, and retiring out of active life with the fruits of his

hard-earned laurels, during thirty-seven years of an honest and hard-earned business career.

"He gave us a fair start up fortune's ladder, and George and I, being younger, more active and enterprising, and of a faster generation of men, we commenced to speculate on a small scale, increasing with the years of an active business life. We amassed a fortune after we had been in business fourteen years. I should have been as active to-day as I was then but for the death of my more than brother. This stroke shattered me more than the loss of all my large fortune would have done, and after seeing my best friend laid to rest, I withdrew from active life. I believe, if it were not for my daughter Maud, I should have been buried with my departed friend to-day.

"But I am transgressing. When I proposed to George that we should discard our bachelor life he readily consented to my proposition, and we then and there commenced naming over all our lady acquaintances for a choice. I was keeping company with Maud's mother, Lucy Varnley, whose father was a well-to-do farmer, and George was going with Violet Breckenridge.

"We concluded that these two ladies were all that man could wish for, and we accordingly selected them as our choice in prospect, and before we parted for the night promised each other to propose the coming Wednesday evening at a grand ball that was to be held on that evening, and set the time of marriage six months from its date, so that we could be married the same time and make our wedding tour together,

not wishing to be separated on this important event.

"We were married as agreed upon, and the second year of marriage life George's wife presented him with a young son, while my wife presented me with a daughter eight years after. I, at that time, considered myself less fortunate than my friend, in being possessed with a girl baby instead of a boy, as I had set my heart on a son, as my future heir. When Maud was two years of age we conceived the idea that by promising their hands in marriage that this would further cement the friendship we had for each other. We made a solemn promise that if one should die before the other, that the living one should carry out the contract to the letter. We even bound ourselves by writing, and made our wills to bear direct on this union; that if one of the children should not agree to the terms of the contract and will of the parents, that both fortunes, except \$1,000, should revert to the one willing to live up to the contract.

"So now, Mr. Larkin, you see it is impossible for Maud to ever be more to you than your cousin, that is, if your actions toward Maud are gentlemanly and courteous in the future."

Maud as well as Richard was surprised at the revelations of her father. This story did not make as much of an impression on Richard as it did on Maud, and taking time to weigh his words well, replied:

"Colonel Blackstone, I have listened to your trumped up story of brotherly love between yourself and friend, and if you think that it will deter me from my pur-

pose, you are greatly mistaken. I will have Maud in spite of you or herself."

"I am pained to be the one to tell you to leave this house, and never cross its threshold again. Now, sir, go! You have lost all respect for yourself and at last shown yourself in your true colors. You are walking in the footsteps of your father, and have a care, sir, that you do not fetch up in a felon's cell. Go!"

The allusion to his father was too much for the fiery temper of Richard, and he flew at the Colonel with the ferocity of a tiger and bore him to the floor, drew a murderous knife from his pocket and plunged it to the hilt in the Colonel's breast, remarking:

"Little did you dream, Colonel Blackstone, that I would reach a felon's cell through your miserable death, and thus I rid myself of one barrier to Maud and her millions."

Drawing the weapon from the wound in the colonel's breast, and thinking that he had killed him, he turned his attention to Maud, who had remained a spectator to her father's horrible fate, and not capable of going to his assistance or calling for help, she stood as if spellbound with horror, and had just come to herself as Richard turned toward her. She ran from the room screaming for help, while Richard was fleeing across the lawn into the darkness.

The servants gathered around the colonel, and summoned the physician, who happened to be at his residence close by. After a careful examination of the wound it was found to be merely a flesh wound, and that he would, in a few days, be all right again; that

all he needed now was care and rest. The most he feared was from nervous excitement, which might prostrate him for an indefinite time.

Maud was overjoyed at the glad tidings of the physician when she learned that her ever kind father would be spared to her; and in her exuberance of joy her strong nature gave way and she was prostrated with brain fever, and for seven weeks the murderous assault on her father was enacted to her vision; her life at times was despaired of, and it tasked the faculty to their utmost to bring her back to reason and health. But an ever kind Providence shielded her and restored her, after she was assured that her brain scenes were all a delusion and that her father was alive and well.

Richard, after the deed, repaired to the office of his benefactor, Mr. Prierly, and taking all the available money and bonds that were in the safe left the country, fleeing from one place to another, dodging the minions of the law; and thus it is that we find him in the company of the outlaw, and why Maud was carried off by him to their retreat.

CHAPTER XV

THE HOME OF THE BRIGANDS

On the right bank of the Missouri River and seven miles from Baxter Springs, was an old flint cave, where the Indians during the stone age were wont to go and repair their warlike instruments. Here they hewed out their rude spear and arrow heads, as well as their stone axes. To this day pleasure seekers will not miss an opportunity of visiting this cave and bringing away with them specimens of flint rudely fashioned by the cunning hand of the Indian, and discarded by them, for some defect in the stone made it useless for the purposes they were intended.

This cave was now used as a stronghold by the daring robber, Black Jack, and a reckless band of followers and hardened criminals, who would not stop at any crime to further their ends.

To this rendezvous our young heroine, Maud Blackstone, was spirited, and in a room handsomely fitted up in rude taste she sat. As we look in upon her she is just in the act of eating her midday meal, brought to her by the old negress, Aunt Hagar, who still acted as her servant.

Maud and Aunt Hagar were conversing. The negress was trying to persuade the prisoner to eat a few more of the nice muffins she had prepared for her.

"It is no use, Auntie Hagar, to ask me to eat any more. My good friend, my heart is too full and the food that I have eaten already seems to strangle me."

"No use of yo' talkin' dat way, chile; yo' will die on my han' ef yo' don' eat mo'. 'Sides, chile, de major am gwine to visit yo' to-day, an' I want yo' to be lookin' up as ef ole Auntie Hagar has not gone an' starved yo'."

"Well, Auntie, I will try and eat just another one to please you, for you have been so kind to me since my captivity that I cannot refuse you this one pleasure; but do tell me who the major is that is going to pay me a visit here to-day."

"Why, golly, chile, doesn't yo' know, it's de tall gen'leman dat brought yo' heare. Las' night he comed heare an' brought a large bundle wid him, an' he says to me: 'Auntie Hagar, yo' will find some rich clothes in dat yar bundle, an' I want yo' to give dem to de lady captive an' see dat she puts dem on, too, an' tell her I'se gwine to visit her sometime to-morrow arternoon, an' have her lookin' pert an' nice.'"

"I will not put any clothes on that this man brought me, Auntie; I will wear those that I have on."

"But, chile, yo' clos' am all dusty an' trabel-stained, an' a change will do yo' good, so yo' take ole auntie's advice an' put dem on when I bring dem to yo'."

"Well, Auntie, to please you I will."

"Yo' is a blessed chile, an' it's a pity to keep yo' cooped up yere in dis way, as if yo' was a bird. If ole Auntie Hagar had her way, you would not be kept yere."

"Oh, Auntie, cannot you manage so that we can make our escape from this place? and once away from here I can find friends to defend us until I can communicate with my father, and then I will see that you will want for nothing ever afterward."

"Golly, chile, but yo' is good, but it 'ud be as much as this ole nigger's head am worf if we was caught; so think no mo' of it, chile, for we has got to make de best of it now, an' perhaps yo' friends will come an' get yo' out ob dis fo' long; so, chile, don't be worry-ing about it, but keep up, an' pray de good Lor' dat he will take yo' out ob de house ob bondage, an' auntie wid yo'."

The meal being over, the negress cleared away the remains of the repast, and going to a recess hewed out of the solid rock took therefrom a bundle which she carefully untied, and brought forth several new dresses and other garments that a princess might wear. Maud, although loathing them now, could not help but silently admire their richness and grandeur.

Auntie Hagar, selecting out of the abundance of finery what she thought would become the captive best, bundled up the rest and put them away, remarking as she did so that she had been a waiting maid to her young misses when she was a slave to a Virginia planter in the South; and that if her charge cared to hear it she would relate what she had to endure when in slavery.

Maud told auntie to sit down and tell her about her slave days and about her young misses.

CHAPTER XVI

AUNT HAGAR'S SLAVERY DAYS

"When I was a young colored gal on de ole plantation dat I fust remembers on in de Souf, I used to be waitin' maid to my young misses, an' I used to take all de pride imaginable in tryin' to make my young misses, who was den just sixteen summers, outshine all de odder young white folk ob dat district. When of a Sabbath or for a gran' party at a neighboring plantation, my misses always was de best dressed and de han'somest of all de rest of de white gals dere, an' my misses used to call her Jule de perfection ob servants, an' used to run up to me when de party was ober, an' I was waitin' for her to come, an' take this black face 'tween her two little angel han's an' kiss dese great big lips ob mine. Fact, miss.

"But my misses was too good to stay wid de odder white trash, an' de good Lor' called her to his fold, an' arter my little angel Minnie was buried in de family buryin' groun', de death ob his only daughter worked on de massar so dat he packed up an' took de rest of his family to Europe, an' while dere he was takin sick wid de fever an' died dere. De estate was in a bad condition at de time of massar's death, an' when de young massar arriv' home wid his mother, he seemed to have a big care on his mind, an' it made all

us niggers sorry to see him dat way, fo' he was so good an' kind to eber so many ob us, when de oberseer used to want to flog us he would not let him.

"He went aroun' de plantation wid his head down, and his han's folded behin' him, an' when he did hol' his head up he looked at us poor slaves sorrowful-like. We thought it was on 'count ob de death of his sister an' fadder dat made him look so.

"But one day all us slabes was called out ob de cotton field an' ordered into de storage house, where dere was a large crowd of neighboring planters an' odder strangers assembled. One of de men present got up on a box an' he read an' read ebber so long out ob a paper, somethin' about an execution an' a mortgage, an' bye an' bye anodder man he got up on de same box an' read somethin', an' de young massar den tole my husban, to stan' on anodder box, an' I could see tears in de young massar's eyes. Den de first man got upon de box arter de oder man finished de long readin' ob de paper, an' said: 'Dis yere slabe,' meanin' my husban', 'is strong of lim' an' soun' in body, an' ought to fotch a good price.' Den all us niggers knew what dat meant, an' we began to cry; but we was tole to stop dat, by de oberseer, or get de cat-ob-nine-tails. Us niggers knew what to expect if de oberseer took us in han', so we stopped cryin' fo' we knew it were no use as it would do no good. Den de man what spoke ob de merits ob my husban' said to de odders: 'Now, gen'lemen, what is I offered to start de sale ob dis soun' nig?' One man offered five hundred dollars, an' den dey kep' biddin' an' biddin'

on my husban, till I thought dey would go to de clouds befo' dey would stop, an' I began to feel proud ob my husban' fotchin' such a good price, an' looked at Sally Simpson, who used to be my ribal when my husban' an' me was keepin' company, an' she looked at me an' turned up her nose. One ob de men presently offered sixteen hundred dollars, an' he was tole he could hab him.

"Den young massar he stepped up to me an' took hole of my han' and led me forward, an' says:

" 'Gen'lemen, dis young mulatto am de wife ob dat nigger jus' sol' to Mr. Blutherting, an' I pray yo' will not separate them from each other. She has, during my sister's life, been very kind to her, an' if yo' respect my feelings in de matter yo' will let her be taken with her husban'.' "

"Well, I was placed on de box, an' one man arter cat-maulin' me ober offered a thousand dollars for me, an' great excitement took place, an' I could not keep up wid de biddin', an' I only looked at Mr. Blutherting all de time, till he went out ob de crowd. At last I was sold to Mr. Santill, who owned de next plantation to ourn. He was a very bad man, we was tole by his slabes, who used to visit us on Sundays.

"When I comed to realize dat I was to be separated from my poor husban' I could not keep down my emotions, an' I commenced to bawl right out, an' if dey had killed me right dar and den I could not help it. But when our little son, George Washington Junius Brutus Hagar, a little nigger of three years,

was bid off to a man from Georgia, in anodder State, I was nearly crazy, an' I begged dem on my two knees in the name of de good Lor' to let me hab my chile, but dey would not.

"De sale ob de niggers took' nearly all dat day, an' de nex' day we was all taken to our new homes an' I was separated from my husban' an' chile, an' from all I had known from de time we was children togedder. Since dat time, until de good Lincum raised de sojers to free us poor slabes, I was kep' on de plantation ob massar Santill, an' made to marry anodder nigger, who I did not like so well as my first man.

"After we was freed by the sojers, an' de plantation broken up, I come to de norf an' have been driftin' aroun' de country eber since, tryin' to fin' my ole man an' my little son George Washington, but I'se gwine to gin it up; dey mus' be dead dis long while, fo' I can't fin' dem any mo'."

After her recital Aunt Hagar buried her face in her hands and commenced to weep bitterly, bemoaning her loss, while rocking herself to and fro.

Maud tried to comfort the stricken woman in her grief, and after a while succeeded. When Aunt Hagar looked up again all traces of her deep grief had vanished, and she was once more the good old servant.

"What am de use ob flyin' in de face ob de Lor'? Ef he has taken dem home to his blessed kingdom I ought to be happy; dat when he calls dis poor tired chile to hebben he will show dem to me, an' we will be mo' happy dere den yere on airth. So I'se not gwine

to weep any mo' fo' dem, nor t'ink of dem yere in life
again, but t'ink of dem in dat

Happy lan', far, far away
Where saints an angels stan',
Bright, bright as day."

Aunt Hagar sang these few well-remembered lines
in a clear, rich soprano voice, and jumping up from
her seat she told Maud that she must prepare to be
dressed, as it was near time for the major to call.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MASK THROWN OFF

Maud had barely finished her toilet, and Aunt Hagar had just left the apartment, when the major spoken of in the preceding chapter, who was none other than Richard Larkin, announced his presence. There he stood, holding up the rich curtain that separated Maud's apartment from the main hall of the robber's retreat, in the cave. Maud looked up at him with the bitterest hatred and in a tone that boded Larkin no good said:

"So, murderer, you have shown your cowardly face at last. Not content with trying to murder my father, you steal away the child, and by so doing bring sorrow to his gray hairs; he who has never given you cause to harm him thus."

"Yes, my beautiful cousin, I meet you now in a far different place from that of your palatial home, where I can talk to you of my love to my heart's content, without the fear of being thrown into the street by your father or his lackeys. The men surrounding us here are in my pay, and must do as I dictate to them. I have you in my power, and nothing on earth shall take you out of it until you consent to be my wife."

"You may have me in your power, fiend, but as far as your trying to make me comply to your

wishes, you will see that I still retain the same spirit I did on the night of your cowardly and murderous attack on my father's life."

"It is well to chide me of my attack on your father; I deserve this at your hands. I have been sorry ever since of that hasty step. But your rebukes on that score will not stop me from consummating the dearest wish of my life, that you be my wife, with or without your consent in the matter. So you had better give in with good grace."

"Never, Richard Larkin, will I consent to be your wife, in thought, word or deed; and know also that I despise you with the utmost loathing that one person can conceive for another."

"Talk on, my pretty bird, your loathing will not avail you much; you are in my power, and my wish is law here, do not forget that."

"I may be in your power, but you cannot compel me to be your wife against my will."

"We will see about that when the time comes. I have sent up to a little settlement in Kansas where a young minister is residing, who used to be a college chum of mine, and I expect him here in a few days to make us man and wife, and our marriage will be as binding as if the nuptials took place in a grander and more befitting style in the eastern States, where you should have consented that they should have taken place, when I made the proposal to you not long ago."

"He dare not commit such a sacrilegious act as the one just mentioned by you."

"Yes, he dare; he must. He is in my power and a

word dropped from me in one of the deacon's ear of his parish would ruin him, but if he complies with my request, which he surely will do, he need have no fear for the future. For once you are my wife I will see that you take a wife's place."

"Monster, have you no heart, or is it as stony as this rocky cavern, that you have no regard for the misery you are causing myself and father?"

"I had a heart once, but your refusal of its offering not long since has made a demon out of me. When I left your side on that never-to-be-forgotten night, I swore that if I had to remove heaven and earth I would possess you and your father's millions. Thus far, you see, I have kept my oath, and I am almost on the eve of its fulfillment."

Maud, throwing herself on her knees before him, beseeched him by all the ties that bound them, and by the recollection of bygone days to forbear in his madness and restore her to her home and friends, and she would cherish his memory and cause all bitterness between himself and her father to disappear, and he would once again become a respected visitor to her father's house; if it were money he wanted she would cause to be given him any sum that he might elect.

"Ha, ha! Arise from your uncomfortable position as suppliant before me on this hard floor. It is not meet that one so young and tender should kneel in that cramped position. 'Pon my life, you should have studied for the stage, you took the part of Virginius to perfection. It is now time that I should recite mine; so listen."

"Forbear, forbear! Your mockery of my prayer drives me to madness. Begone from my presence, this instant! I will not listen to your mockery of my position longer; but remember that there is a just God over us, and he will not allow your wicked schemes to prosper."

"I go, my beautiful cousin, and hope when we meet again that you will be more docile. Bye-bye, my pearl of the rocky cavern."

CHAPTER XVIII

INTERVIEW WITH THE GREAT DETECTIVE

The reader will remember that we left Arthur Blackwell on his way to Chicago to consult with the great detective, Allan Pinkerton. On arriving in the garden city of the West, he drove at once to the detective's agency at No. — Fifth Avenue. He stated his errand to one of the officials in the main office, and Arthur was courteously escorted into the private office of the great detective. Mr. Pinkerton sat at his desk examining the reports that were being sent in from the main telegraph offices of the city to him over his own private wire. The little instrument clicked continuously, and Arthur found the detective thus busily engaged receiving, answering and directing his multitude of sleuth hounds all over the country. So vast was his business that it would seem to an observer that few, if any, of the hardened criminals ever placed within this network could ever hope to get beyond its meshes; and they were right, few ever got out of it once he spread this network around them and set his bloodhounds on the trail.

On Arthur's entrance into the presence of the chief, Mr. Pinkerton called an assistant to attend to the wires to receive and write off the reports as they came

in and to answer the more important ones that must have immediate attention.

Beckoning Arthur to a seat near him, he inquired his business, and if it were important; that he was very busy, and had very little time to spare, except where a case required his immediate attention.

"You shall be the judge as to that, Mr. Pinkerton, after I have given you the facts of the case."

Then introducing himself, he gave him all the details of Maud's capture as he had them from her aunt's letter to her father.

Mr. Pinkerton was all attention after learning from whom Arthur was sent, for Colonel Blackstone, the millionaire, was an old customer of his, and he was well known to him, his agency having served him in quite a noted affair some years before.

"Well, Mr. Blackwell, your case does seem to claim my attention immediately. Excuse me a moment, until I send off a message."

Mr. Pinkerton, going to the instrument, his busy and experienced fingers commenced to thrum off a message. As he stood by the sideboard, his business-like air and confident manner inspired Arthur as to the great detective's ability to master any case that might be placed in his hands.

In a few moments the detective came back to his seat and said:

"Mr. Blackwell, I have just sent off a message to one of my assistants who was in the neighborhood at the time the abduction took place, who is looking up a little matter for the Fort Scott & Gulf Railroad; also

one to an agent further on, who is taking care of a case the U. S. Government has placed in my hands to ferret out, and in an hour's time I may be able to give you some information.

"So you intend to go into that wild region yourself, Mr. Blackwell?"

"Yes, sir. I promised the colonel before I left his bedside that I would bring his daughter back to him in person, and I will fulfill that promise or never go back myself."

"That's the right kind of spirit I like to see in a young man, and if you stick to it there will be no such word as a failure in your endeavor. You've got the right kind of stuff in you, that would be a credit to our profession.

"Lately we have experienced great annoyance in the country you are about to go to. The lawless have a broad territory to hide in, and they give our men a long chase for it, once they reach within its boundary; and then all law ceases, for then they are amongst their own kin, and their friends will do all in their power to shield the hunted criminal from the law's clutch. I advise you to go well prepared for a life of hardship and perhaps the loss of a little blood. Believe me, when I tell you this, that I do not wish to intimidate you, or wish to have you turn aside from your worthy resolution; but only to prepare you for the worst, knowing the country as I do, I tell you before hand, what perhaps you will experience."

"I take your kind warning in a friendly spirit, and thank you, Mr. Pinkerton for it; but if I knew before-

hand that I was starting to my doom, I would still go to help rescue the daughter of the best of friends."

"Then in that case, if you wish it, I will order your outfit for you, and see that you go in proper shape and well armed."

"You are kind and thoughtful, and I accept your assistance."

At this moment, Mr. Pinkerton's quick ear detected the arrival of a reply to his message, by the clicking of the instrument, and excusing himself to Arthur, went over to receive the report.

Arthur noticed that whatever information Mr. Pinkerton received from the instrument, it gave him satisfaction; for he advanced toward Arthur with a smile on his face, and said:

"Mr. Blackwell you must leave to-night, for Cherokee, a small town in southeastern Kansas, and near the Indian Reservation, where through the aid of the best detective in the world, the telegraph, I have been able to overtake one of my agents a Mr. Wm. Crawford, a careful, trustworthy and experienced man, and in whose hands I can resign you with implicit confidence for the future, knowing that he will, with your help, unravel what now seems to us at present, a deep mystery, unless, as I said before it be for the sake of ransom. I will appoint you as a special on my staff, and give you a badge of office; which you will use with discretion. You are to follow the councils of Mr. Crawford in all matters connected with this affair of yours."

"Now you must excuse me as I have to make out a

report for you to take with you, and I wish you to deliver it to Mr. Crawford in person. You having a few leisure hours before the train leaves, can do up the city in that time. I will introduce you to one of our staff, who will escort you around."

CHAPTER XIX

ARTHUR'S FIRST ATTEMPT AS A DETECTIVE

Two hours afterwards, Arthur stood again in the presence of the great detective, Mr. Pinkerton, who giving him his final instructions, and bidding him to make a change of garments when he reached the great railroad center of the west, Kansas City, Mo., and no matter how unbecoming they appeared, to wear them as if he had been used to such toggery all his life.

Checks for his baggage were placed in his hand by the detective, and springing into the cab in waiting, Arthur was driven to the western bound car on his way to new scenes.

Daylight the next morning found Arthur at Kansas City, fronting the old depot, where now stands the magnificent and imposing structure of the Union Depot. He had barely time to lunch and get his baggage rechecked before the conductor shouted: "All aboard," he was now on his way again to meet his new acquaintance the detective Crawford.

After the train was well under way, Arthur, following the detective's advice, asked permission of the conductor of the sleeper if he couldn't have his baggage brought to him in order that he might make a change in dress.

"Can't break the company's rules young man, nohow."

Lifting up the lappel of his coat he showed to the conductor his detective shield.

"If that's your racket we will be obliged to do as you request, for the agency you serve, we have orders to respect their wish and help at all times; therefore give me your check and I will have the porter bring the satchel to you immediately from the baggage car."

The satchel was brought, and on opening it Arthur found in its recesses, three complete disguises, with a note of explanation about their make-up. The note explained that he was to don the gray suit and take off a down easter, as near to perfection as he could; which by its size, looked as if cut for a man twice his build. When on, they were baggy and ill-fitting.

Arthur had often seen farmers of the Eastern States with just such fitting clothes and the remembrances of the ludicrous appearance they made on the streets brought a hearty laugh at the thought. He applied red ochre to his face, and his beard, now of three days' growth, gave him a ruddy appearance. He mussed his hair till it became a waddy mass about his head, and fastened in the buttonhole of his swallow tailed coat, a piece of red ribbon, which was to be a recognition sign for Mr. Crawford, when he reached his destination; then seating himself in a seat with his heels resting on the back of another, he began to think up and study his part; he had just caught on to the Yankee twang, when the train drew up before a small station for mid-day refreshments, and he thought he

would step out and have a little practice, to see how far he had advanced with his new character.

Stepping out on the platform he followed the eager crowd into the depot, where a lunch counter stood. Swaggering and shuffling along he elbowed his way up to the counter and helped himself to what he most desired, at the same time throwing down a little silver five cent piece, with the remark:

"Gol darn my buttons, but them ere dognuts air pert an nice. They don't make such as 'em dognuts away down in Maine; by hunkey!"

This address was made to the waiter, who had taken up the five-cent piece and was gazing at it and thinking of the stranger's audacity in tendering such a small coin in payment, replied:

"I say, old hard-pan, do they charge only five cents for a half-dozen doughnuts, a whole mince pie and a cup of coffee, down where you came from?"

"In course they does, Stranger!"

"Well them pieces will do amongst the mossbacks and buckwheaters, but not out here, my verdant friend, so pan out the shiners, double quick!"

"You don't mean tew say that I've got to gin ye more money, eh?"

"That's about the size of it, my baby elephant. I suppose your pap just turned you loose on the big pasture, and you are a little short of hay, so I'll only tax you forty-five cents more, my lark."

Arthur began to scratch his head in a perplexed sort of way in order to gain time, for the waiter's ready wit was a surprise to him.

"Well I swan tew gracious, who'd a thunk it, they tax the victuals a person eats in the west. By the big horn spoons, I'll leave this kentry arter I look at my bruther Ephraim. I wouldn't mind tellin' you uns that he wants me to squat on a prairie farm next to his'n; but gol darn my socks ef I dew, so thar!"

The ludicrous remarks between Arthur and the waiter brought roars of laughter out of the bystanders, who appreciated the diversion.

Arthur then threw down a silver fifty-cent piece with the remark:

"Thar goes the last of that twenty-dollar gold piece that I've been a savin' av fer nigh unto three years, by gosh; an' if Sarey Ann Spinkton knew that her Joshua Whitespaddle was a-goin on throwin' his money away in this ere style, wouldn't there be fun in ther family of the Spinktons and Whitespaddles, by gum!"

Muttering to himself he left the spectators in roars of laughter, believing him to be a tenderfoot. When the train pulled out from the depot, the conductor approached Arthur and tapped him on the shoulder, saying:

"Ticket, if you please, sir!"

Arthur slyly showed the conductor the detective badge. The conductor excused himself with the remark, "You'll do," while a broad smile overspread his features as he passed on.

He had been a silent witness to the sallies between the supposed down-easter and the waiter. Arthur with his face buried in the folds of a newspaper, which he seemed very much interested in, was inwardly

laughing to himself at his success in his new disguise.

The hours dragged along wearily all the afternoon and the slow moving train, helped in a measure to try the strongest nerves. Arthur was just about to commence some new diversion when the whistle sounded down brakes, and the conductor called out Cherokee as the next station.

Arthur had barely touched the platform of the station when a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder, and turning around on his heel he saw the picture of his almost second self.

The stranger was the first to speak:

"I swan tew gracious if it isn't my brother Joshua?"

And Arthur taking up the cue, replied:

"Bust my buttons, but its my brother Ephraim! what I've cummed to see."

They both fell into each other's arms to the amusement of the crowd. While thus embraced, the detective, Crawford, for he it was, whispered something in Arthur's ear, which made him withdraw from his supposed brother Ephraim, and ejaculate:

"Then come! I am ready, do not let us waste a moment!"

"You will have a long hard ride before you my friend, do you think you will be equal to the task?"

"Yes!"

"Then come! I have everything prepared."

CHAPTER XX

THE MEETING OF FRIEND AND FOE

The reader will remember that we left Robert Folsom and his friends at the gambling den kept by Jim Blakely; or, "Scarred Face Jim," the proprietor of the Golden Lion, in Baxter Springs, where the meeting between Robert and Richard Larkin took place, immediately after the duel between Squint-eyed Bob and the Leader.

Richard Larkin on recognizing Robert the reader will remember made the ejaculation:

"Robert Folsom?"

"Yes, Richard Larkin, it is I! We have met at last, after the many weary days' chase you and your hired band of cutthroats have given us."

"Then you had better not have ever come up with me, Robert Folsom."

"Yes, better for you I suppose. It would have given you great satisfaction to be left alone to complete your hellish designs, murderer!"

"Have a care, my young bantam, how you address a gentleman, for if you provoke me too much, I will forget that we were once friends."

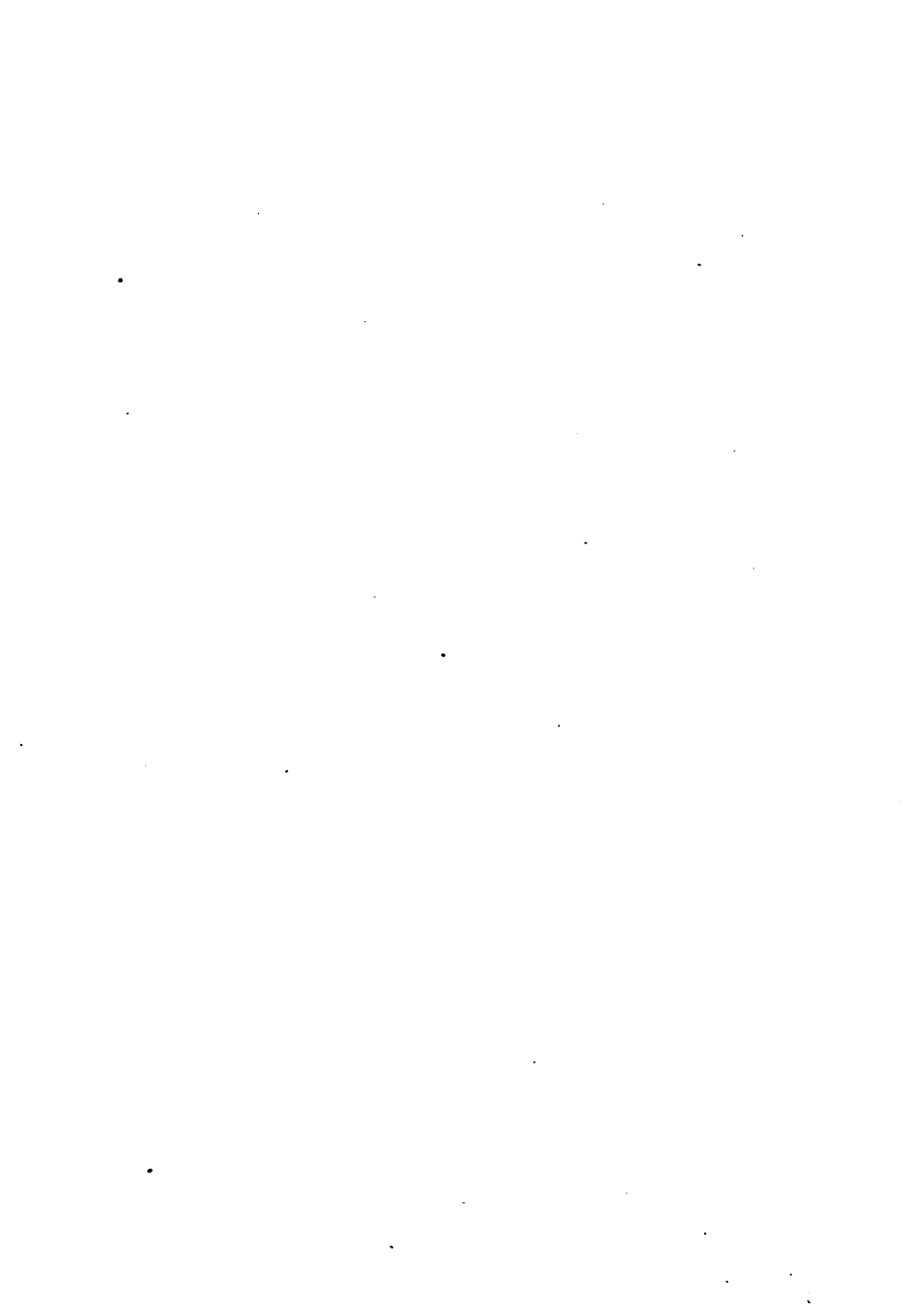
"Your friend! I despise myself for ever having taken a thief and a murderer into my confidence."

"Your death will be on your own head Robert Fol-

"Have a care, my young bantam, how you address a gentleman."

(31)





som, much as I hate to spill human blood; and the gentlemen here present will bear me witness that you have provoked me past all endurance; then why should I not put you out of my path forever and thus end this little by-play."

"For the simple reason, Richard Larkin, that you are a coward, and only war with defenceless old men and women; but when faced by a man as well armed as yourself, your cowardly heart quails before a just rebuke and you are compelled to listen to your cowardly deeds."

"Enough, my young coxcomb, you have brought your doom on yourself, so die, you will be one less in my path."

Richard Larkin during the conversation, still kept his hand on the butt of his revolver and as soon as he uttered the words, "so die," he raised his revolver on a level with Robert's head; but the ever-ready weapon of Squint-eyed Bob was on hand to checkmate the coward's attempt and his was the first to speed its mission, and a ball from it shattered Larkin's pistol hand, knocking the revolver out of his hand to the floor. With a muttered curse Larkin leaned against the counter faint and pale and shaking with fear.

He rested thus for a few moments and a bitter smile of hatred overspread his face, as he said:

"It is your day of triumph now, Robert Folsom, but mine will come sooner than you may wish for it."

Before the words had hardly left his mouth, Larkin, glaring like a tiger, plunged through the crowd of which Robert and himself were the center, and darted

away in the darkness, with Robert and his friends in hot pursuit.

Larkin, when he made his hasty departure from the gambling den ran up main street: reaching the last house he turned to his left and kept up his gait until he reached the Missouri River. Standing in the shadow of a projecting rock he commenced to bind up his wounded hand, while muttering:

"For every drop of blood that flows from this member and for every throb of the pulse, I will give Robert Folsom hours of torture.

"You will, eh! Wall I guess Squint-Eyed Bob will have a finger in the pie, mister, or he's no jedge of cattle, my pigeon!"

"'Tis me turtle dove ov a woman staler, an' it's Hugh Muldoon, to the fore that says forninst yer two dhirty eyes that ye won't lay as much as yer dhirty bloodstained hand on me friend Robert, ye mertherin' villian ov the wurruld."

"Ha, ha, ha, Larkin! you were not aware that I had friends in the crowd watching every move you made when you treacherously sought my life. You thought to take me at a disadvantage and murder me but you see you were disappointed."

Larkin was so sure that he had distanced his pursuers when he stopped to bind his wounded hand, that he forgot all precaution, and the remarks he had made aloud pointed out his hiding place to the three friends and he was taken by surprise.

"Well, as there is three against one I suppose I must give in, so what are you going to do with me?"

"Sure we're goin' to hang ye, ye dhirty blaggard; didn't I bring this little bit ov hempen rope all the way from Dallas, ye dhirty clodhopper ov a thafe!"

"Robert Folsom will you stand quietly by and see me murdered?"

"Then villain, tell me where you have hidden Maud Blackstone, and I will save your carcass from the carrion."

"Ha, ha, ha; I still hold the winning card. Find her if you can; she is in safe retreat, out of which she will not come till she is my wife, I will yet wring your heart through hers. If you kill me she goes to a worse doom than as my wife, so do your worst."

"Coward, she can never be your wife, she is already a wife; so you see you do not hold the winning card yet, Richard Larkin."

"Oh, if you think this trumped up story of Maud being married will have any bearing on me, you are greatly mistaken! Moreover, I do not believe it, for if her marriage had taken place, I should have known it ere this."

"It is true though; Maud Blackstone and I were married in secret not more than three months since; so now tell me where my wife is, for you see, her detention will do you no good and save you from a just fate."

"If I knew for certain that Maud and you, Robert Folsom, were married as you say, I would kill her with my own hand before I would restore her to your arms again. But it cannot be true, I will not believe it; so

your trumped up story is wasted on me. I bid you good night gentlemen."

With this he gave one spring into the river and the water closing over him he was hidden from view, leaving the three friends on the bank watching for his appearance.

CHAPTER XXI

ANOTHER LINK IN THE DETECTIVE'S CHAIN

Morning dawned fair and bright to the inhabitants of Baxter Springs, and all traces of the scenes of the evening before were cleared away and a busy throng of pedestrians were promenading the streets; some intent on making purchases in the stores, whose wares took up a good part of the sidewalk in front, and others strolling along out of idle curiosity.

Two of the idlers more conspicuous and noticeable than the others, from the fact of their resemblance to each other and their odd and picturesque costumes, were walking along with the busy throng, with linked arms. They were taking a bird's-eye view of the town and noting every important place and person they passed or met in their perambulations through the town; but unseemingly not to do so, as they gave no evidence of any important discovery they might have made by the looks of their immovable features.

The two strangers, as the reader has already imagined, are Arthur Blackwell and the detective William Crawford, disguised as the Yankees. When they had reached the Golden Lion, they sauntered in, and seating themselves at an out-of-the-way table in the farthest end of the large room, they called to one of the waiters to bring two lager beers, after the beer was

brought and paid for the detective addressed his new acquaintance and said:

"Mr. Blackwell, as I told you last night on our way here; that when I was here a few days ago and received the dispatch from my chief, acquainting me of your coming and your errand here, I had just got a clew to the government business, in whose interest I was sent west to ferret out a large gang of counterfeiters, who have been flooding the market for over a year past with spurious bills and coin. I had been shadowing a man all day whom I am certain is the head of a large band of thieves whose retreat, I have no doubt, is somewhere in this immediate vicinity; when he entered this same place, I also entered, disguised in a different rig from this one, and seated myself at a table not far distant from the one he selected. He had not been seated long before a flashily dressed man wearing a huge brilliant diamond in his shirt front and a large cluster ring of the same precious stones on the little finger of his right hand entered and walking up to the first comer accosted him in a familiar manner."

"I strained every nerve to hear their conversation, which was carried on in an undertone, and I succeeded in gleaning nearly all of it, and will give it to you in their own words so that you, my friend, will see what a catch I made when I received my chief's dispatch in regard to your case."

"Well Larkin, what success did you have on the hunt, and did the boys obey your orders as I directed them to?"

"'I have no complaint to make against any of your men; they behaved well and did my bidding in every particular. We've had a pleasant journey of it and I have succeeded past my expectations, and without the loss of a man.'

"'That is indeed good news; have you caged the bird and put her in the quarters I had prepared for her reception?'

"'Yes! I have the bird behind the bars, and she is now in her new quarters.'

"'This little deal of yours may bring the minions of the law down on me and my boys. We have not been in the habit of taking prisoners to our retreat and I expect you to pay well for our help in this business.'

"'You need not fear anything from the law. Everything was done very quietly and besides we are a great way off from the scene. In regard to pay for your help, I will give you what I promised I would!'

"'The man called Larkin put his hand in his breast pocket and pulled forth a well-filled wallet and began counting out notes of large denominations, and handed them to the other, with the remark:

"'Here is twenty-five hundred dollars that I promised when the bird was caged, and the balance of the five thousand, I will give you after the marriage takes place.'

"'Ha, ha, but this is good, did you expect me to do this job for you for so little? Not if old Black Jack knows himself, and he guesses he knows which side his bread is buttered on. Aside from what you promised, you will have to pay me individually, five thou-

sand dollars, as nearly all this goes to the boys. I have got the bird in my cage and if you don't ante up will hold her for ransom. Her father will give more than that for her safe return, so hand over the swag, my innocent covey and afterwards your wish is law with me and the boys.'

" 'This is not just, you are taking me at an unfair advantage. I thought I could depend on your word.'

" 'So you could, my lark, if I had not known you possessed so much wealth as you have just now shown me, so pan over and we will shake hands and be friends, if not, keep out of Black Jack's path in the future, my hunkey.'

"This man Larkin had no other recourse but to respond to the other's demands, and again taking out his wallet, counted out to Black Jack the money, who on receiving the bundle of notes, glared at them admiringly before putting away in his pocket.

"Black Jack called for the drinks and both shook hands over it, swearing to stand by each other.

"After drinking both men arose from their seats and Black Jack said that he had a little business to attend to before he could indulge further.

" 'When will I see you at the retreat?' asked Larkin.

" 'I will be there to-morrow afternoon!' replied Black Jack.

"With these parting words both men separated at the door. I followed Black Jack down the street, he being the one that claimed my attention. As we neared the railway station I thought I would step in for a moment and send off a message to my chief in

cipher, acquainting him of my important discovery before continuing the pursuit of Black Jack. I entered the operator's room and scrawled off a message; when complete I handed it to the operator and when he glanced at it he said:

" 'I have just a few moments ago received another message like this one written in cipher from Chicago, and perhaps you are the person for whom it is addressed. May I ask your name, Sir?'

"I gave him a name which was not my own, but one I had borrowed and was to be known by while here so that no one would recognize me by my name as a detective by the name of Crawford is pretty widely known in these parts.

" 'Yes, that's the name, you are the person. My messenger had been unable to find any one at the hotels by that name, so brought it back here. I am glad you happened in as you did.'

"The operator handed me the telegram in cipher which was sent me while you were in the presence of my chief in Chicago, of which you are familiar. I read it through and a new light dawned upon me. That conversation about caging the bird, etc., was now as plain to me as if I was with them in the abduction of Maud Blackstone. I therefore recalled my former telegram and indited another in its place.

"I came out of the station again for the purpose of continuing the pursuit of Black Jack, not thinking but that in a few minutes I would come up with him; but I was disappointed. I did not see him or the man Larkin that day or the next, and it was drawing close

to the time I was to meet you at the station above here."

Arthur Blackwell, who had not interrupted the detective until he had finished his narrative, now exclaimed:

"Mr. Crawford, you detectives are a wonderful people, I know now from a name dropped by you in your narrative that we are on the right trail. This Larkin that had the conversation with Black Jack, is a cousin of Maud Blackstone."

Then Arthur detailed all that took place in regard to the attempted murder of Col. Blackstone by Richard Larkin and his infatuation of Maud for her money's sake, of this the detective was in ignorance.

"You see, Mr. Crawford, that I have been of some use to you already. You found the chain broken and I linked it together."

"Yes indeed you have, for your knowledge of past incidents connected with the party conceived in the abduction, makes everything plain to me, and we will not have to work in the dark any longer; so now let us form our plan of action. I am certain that our men are in this neighborhood and by staying here we have a chance of meeting one or both of these men soon. I have been thinking of a plan that perhaps will help us. We will purchase a lot of cheap jewelry and when it is dark enough we will get a couple of boxes in the street, and set up as street fakirs. We will sell at less than cost in order to draw a crowd around us, and perhaps among those that will assemble we may be able to catch a glimpse of one of the parties we want

to shadow. We will still assume these same disguises; and as I have a good banjo amongst my luggage and can play and sing passably well, we will draw good, for these rough men like some new attraction and it will be a treat that they will not miss for an important engagement. You, of course, can do the selling while I am holding the crowd and on the lookout for a familiar face amongst them. If I should get a glimpse of one, I will stop singing and playing with some excuse or other; and you will do the same by telling them that sales have been exceedingly good and have run out of stock; by this sign, each will know that the other has a clew."

"I think your plan a good one and I will do my best to carry out my share; so let us act at once for you know it is already getting dusk and a couple of cheap torches will have to be manufactured for our use, besides the purchase of articles to sell."

CHAPTER XXII

ARTHUR AND THE DETECTIVE AS STREET FAKIRS

Arthur and the detective went about the town purchasing their outfit for the evening and by the time they had finished and eaten their supper, night closed in around them. They then collected their wares together, and placing them in an old carpet-bag satchel opened their sale of the jewelry opposite the Golden Lion. The detective took a seat on an elevated box where he could have a good view of all the faces around him and commenced to tune up his banjo, while Arthur opened up his wares on another box.

Everything now being ready the detective commenced to pick the banjo in a deft and masterly way. The curiosity of the passers by was aroused, and they stopped to hear the playing, as this kind of outside entertainment was a novel feature to the Baxter folk.

After a large crowd had assembled around the supposed street fakirs, the detective announced that he would sing them a song with banjo accompaniment. And in a rich deep voice he selected the following song for the eager listeners:

IF I'M POOR, I'M A GENTLEMAN STILL

Don't think by my dress I've come here to beg,
Though the sharp pangs of hunger I feel;
The cup of misfortune I've drained to the dregs
But I'm proud tho' I'm a shabby genteel.
A time was, when nobs, who met me would say,
"Ha, Harry, my dear boy, come and dine,"
But now when they meet me they look t'other way,
My company now they decline

Chorus.—Though poverty daily looks in at my door,
I'm hungry, I'm footsore and ill,
I can look the whole world in the face and can say,
If I'm poor, I'm a gentleman still.

After the detective had finished his song and the din of applause which followed it had subsided, Arthur commenced to open the sale of the bogus jewelry.

"Now feller citizens, I and my twin bruther Ephrim havn't kum here tu entertain you fer nuthin, we has kum here on business, likewise pleasure. We has hear sum jewelry which two more on us twin brothers steal down east and send to we uns; and we uns dispose on 'em out hear in this yer kentry at only a small figure, enough to keep us goin' around fer our health.

"What my bruther Joshua told you uns is a fact by gol. We uns is only a doin' it for our health.

"Now gentlemen, we here offer you uns a beautiful pair of cuff buttons an' a set ov studs, an' tu top the hull climax, we will add this brilliant band finger ring.

Whose the lucky purchaser tu take the hull lot at an even quarter ov a dollar?"

"I, I," and several hands were outstretched to be the first to grasp the coveted prize, and for several minutes Arthur was busily engaged doing up similar packages; both feared that their stock would run short before they had accomplished their object.

For nearly half an hour the demand for the articles kept without abatement and only a half dozen packages remained when the sales began to lag; and seeing this the detective commenced to play a few fine accompaniments on the banjo to gain time and give Arthur a breathing spell from his task. He spent his leisure time in scanning the sea of faces before him. While thus engaged his eye encountered the form of Robert Folsom among the group and he wondered what could have brought him out in this strange place, Arthur was not recognized by Robert, as the disguise he wore protected him from recognition by anyone not in his secret.

The detective began to sing again in a lively strain the old time-worn song of "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers:"

Oh, my golden slippers am laid away,
Kase I don't 'spect to wear 'em 'till my wedding day,
An' my long-tailed coat, dat I loved so well,
I will wear up in de chariot in the morn.
An' my long white robe, dat I bought last June,
I'm gwine to get changed kase it fits too soon,
An' de ole' gray horse dat I used to drive,
I will hitch up——"



“What my brother Joshua told yo’ uns is a fact, by gosh!”

"By the Lord mighty, I busted a string on this 'ere banjo ov ourn, an' I'll have tu put it away fer this evening."

As the detective finished speaking he looked in a knowing way toward Arthur and he, comprehending the situation began to pack his kit, remarking to the crowd:

"Friends, as our music as has interested you has given eout, we will have tu adjourn fer this night, but termorrer night we uns hope tu meet you uns here again, when we will try to entertain you uns with some new music an' singing; thankin' you uns fer your kind patience, we bid you uns good night.' "

The detective, followed by Arthur, passed out of the crowd and steered for the Golden Lion; most of their audience, thinking that there would be a repetition of their singing and banjo playing inside, followed them into the saloon.

Jim Blakely stood behind the bar and of him they asked permission to leave their goods until the next evening. He gave it readily and asked them if "They wouldn't have sunthin' to wet their whistle with after their fine singing an' playing." The proffered drink was accepted and then Blakely asked them if they wouldn't play and sing a tune just to amuse the boys, you know. The old shark knew where his bread was buttered; all he wanted was for Arthur and the detective to hold the crowd that followed them into his den, by their music.

"Well, Mr——,"

"Jim Blakely is my name, stranger; or as the boys

sometimes call me Scarred Face Jim, for short you know," with a sly wink at the detective.

"Well, Mr. Blakely, I was about to say that our banjo is out of order by the breaking of two of the strings, but to-morrow I will replace them and in the evening I shall not forget your kind invitation."

"Thankee stranger! and you'll find that Jim Blakely is no miser nuther."

While the detective was speaking to Blakely, Arthur noticed that he kept his eyes on a large framed man at the end of the bar at which they were standing, and as Blakely moved off to wait on a customer, the detective whispered in an undertone to Arthur.

"You see that large rough looking chap at the end of the counter there?"

Arthur nodded in assent.

"Well, he's our man. Look sharp and perhaps the other one will make his appearance; if not, we must keep this one in sight, for we must hold him in his den this time."

The clatter of dice as they were placed in and shaken out, and the voice of the faro dealer mingled with the oft repeated word "keno," and the hum of voices drowned all ordinary speaking.

Arthur, casting his glance toward the entrance espied Robert Folsom, followed by his two friends coming in

They made their way up to the bar and Robert took his position near that of Arthur, who could not resist the temptation of making himself known to Robert, so he said to him:

"Robert Folsom, when you are at leisure, and without attracting too much attention, I wish you would withdraw from your friends to that alcove yonder, indicating a place at the other side of the room from which they were standing; I wish to hold a few moment's conversation with you. Come, I am your friend."

Robert looked up with a start at the disguised stranger with some misgivings of treachery; but answered the stranger that he would withdraw and talk with him.

If Robert's life was at stake he could not place the stranger in his memory. When he had finished his beer, he told his companions of the stranger's request and went over to the alcove where Arthur had already taken up a position.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CHAIN LINKED TOGETHER

When Robert had reached the side of the supposed stranger in the alcove, he said:

"Stranger, although you know my name, I do not recognize you as any one I have ever met before, therefore you have me at a disadvantage. Whatever you have to say to me, I wish you would be as expeditious in it as possible, as I have other business of importance that claims my attention."

"Wall, I swan tu gracious, ef ther boy hasn't gone an' losed his head, by gum. Why, my bruther Ephrim and myself knowed ye when yourn wern't knee high tu a grasshopper; an' tu tell me this tu my face, that you un don't know me, Joshua Whitespaddle an' his bruther Ephrim; is enough tu make me bilin' over mad at yo un by mighty."

"I never knew a family by that name that I recollect of, and you must be mistaken in your man, my friend."

"Jerusalem whittaker; but that's good by thunder; when I used tu take you on my knee when you un and we uns were children together living near the old shell lime kiln, on the old Providence road. Ha, that makes you start does it? I rather guess arter you un get yer thinkin' cap on, you will remember the Whitespaddles as used tu live nigh unto you uns hum."

"I cannot call you or any such family to mind; therefore please excuse me, I must be off."

"Well, Robert, I have played with you long enough. Is it possible you have not seen through my disguise. I am, as I told you at the bar, your friend, Arthur Blackwell."

Had a thunderbolt fallen and struck Robert, he could not have been more surprised than by this discovery. Was it possible that his friend Arthur Blackwell was out here on the same quest as himself.

"Can it be possible that you are really Arthur Blackwell?" Taking hold of the outstretched hand and shaking it warmly.

"Yes! Robert, it is your humble servant and no other."

"When you were speaking to me your voice did sound familiar to me but I could not penetrate through your masquerading suit. By the by, you do your disguise justice. I would never have recognized you if you hadn't given it away."

"Thanks for you compliment. Now tell me what brought you out in this heathenish country. You see I am all impatience to learn, for I know it must be something of great importance, I'll be bound."

"If I mistake not, Arthur, the same business brought us both."

"Impossible! The business that I am out here looking up, cannot in no wise interest you, Robert; therefore we cannot be here for the same purpose, I'm sure."

"Well, I know the business that brought you here and as you seem to be in the dark as regards mine, I will explain; but in order to do so I will have to make a confession to you, and perhaps after you have heard it, you will not call me your friend as you have but a moment ago."

"My dear boy, nothing that you may have to say to me will make me change the good opinion I have formed of you; so begin with your recital, for I am on the anxious seat you see."

"Then to begin at the beginning, and to be as brief as possible, I will say that not long since I received a letter from Maud Blackstone, stating in its contents that she had been captured by a band of masked men and carried off, and at the time of writing was in their camp in the vicinity of Dallas, Texas, and asking me to come to her rescue; that her cousin Richard Larkin was at the bottom of her abduction she had no doubt. Borrowing the money of my employer, I followed, and here I am, and judging from your presence here, you must be on the same errand as I am."

"But in the name of humanity, how can Maud Blackstone's capture affect your interests?"

"Ah, Arthur, that's where my confession will come in. Maud and I were recently married in secret, before she left the East to visit her cousin Alice. We loved each other very dearly and did not wish to be separated for even the length of a visit without having a better claim on each other's affections than a mere engagement; besides we wanted to thwart the colonel, who, you know, designed that she should marry no one

else but yourself, whom she could not love as a wife should, but only esteem you as a friend."

"Maud married; and to you. I can hardly believe that I heard aright."

"What I told you is nevertheless true, now you know what brought me here and what interest I have in Maud's rescue. You will now despise me for the cowardly part I took in making her my wife; but the only excuse I have to offer, is that my love for her was too great for me to give her up to another."

"Instead of despising you for cheating me out of Maud, as you supposed, you have done me a great service, my boy, and lifted a great burden off of my mind. You cannot imagine the pleasure your recital has given me. You have saved me from this marriage with Maud that I have dreaded for a long time past, I might say ever since I was charmed by that little fairy Alice Prierly, who, you remember, was thrown in my way while spending her vacations with her cousin Maud. I am not certain whether my love is returned or not, as I have never breathed a word to her of my deep affection for her; but I have hope, and now that your marriage with Maud has made me free from my father's dying promise, I will try to win her love with all the ardor of a lover, and if her heart were of stone, my love will melt it. She has always treated me as the lover of her cousin and as one wholly belonging to another, while in her society. Her wistful look when speaking of my engagement to her cousin gave me my only grounds for hope. Why should my heart go out to her unless there be a responsive return of

affections. So give us your hand, my boy, and wish me success as I now do you. We will always be the best of friends and you may both count on me to make your marriage in the colonel's eyes, a just one."

"Thanks, Arthur, your words have given me joy, and I hope that you may be loved as you love."

"By the bye, who is the person that is dressed like you in this masquerading suit yonder and who looks as if he might be your twin brother?"

"Oh, in my joy I had forgotten that our friends were patiently waiting. He is a detective belonging to Pinkerton's Detective Bureau, who is helping me to ferret out the place where Maud is held captive. That man standing at the end of the counter is concerned in her abduction, and we are piping him, with the purpose of following him to his den, for we are certain from information we have obtained, that she is hidden there."

Arthur then related to Robert all that had transpired since he first took up the trail and of which the reader who has followed us in our wanderings is familiar.

Robert exchanged confidence by telling Arthur his own and his friend's experience since they started in pursuit, not forgetting to mention his meeting with Larkin in the Golden Lion and his subsequent dive into the Missouri River.

"The villain!" said Arthur. "He intended to shoot you down in cold blood in order to put you off his trail and out of his way forever, and he would have probably succeeded but for your friend Squint-Eyed Bob, the noble fellow."

"I have no doubt but that he meant to murder me."

"Now, Robert, we must manage to join forces and be near each other when we are needed, for from what I learn we cannot hope to succeed in recapturing Maud without a desperate struggle."

"Yes, it is best so, for if we have to fight to regain Maud, our forces combined, will make a telling effect on the robbers. I will acquaint my friends of our meeting and you do the same; if agreeable to all, we will work together and may success crown our efforts."

"Ah! the man is moving toward the door. Whatever we have to do must be done quickly, so that we will all understand each other and not conflict."

Black Jack, the robber chief, took his departure from the saloon, followed at a distance by all of the rescuers.

Robert Folsom and his friends took the opposite side of the street, while Arthur and the detective kept the same side as the robber, and on the journey Robert and Arthur made their friends acquainted with each other's proximity.

The detective at first did not seem pleased with the plan, but after thinking the matter over consented that they join forces; but work as they were now doing in squads, as too many together would perhaps be noticed and ruin everything.

Squint-Eyed Bob did not consent quite as readily as the detective, but at last, after considerable persuasion on Robert's part, promised to do all he could; but he "wasn't goin' to be bossed by nary a detective from the Yeast," as he expressed it.

CHAPTER XXIV

BLACK JACK'S IMPATIENCE

Black Jack followed the old beaten trail out on the prairie on past old Fort Pendleton and turning to his left he entered the clustering chaparral growing along the river bank and walked for nearly a mile in the bridle path along the river. Then turning out of the path he went down to the river edge and stopped at the identical spot near the overhanging rock where Robert and his friends overtook Richard Larkin the evening previous.

He scanned the river closely up and down and not finding what he was in search of he gave the exact screech of an owl three times in quick succession. Not receiving a response to his first call he gave three more imitations of the bird named in a much louder key. Still he received no response to his first or second call.

"Thunder, have the boys forgotten the appointment, I wonder! I'll make them pay for this job if they have. It surely can't be past the time that I promised them I would be here." Taking out his watch and lighting a match to see the dial.

"No, it is as I thought, I am on the nick of time. What can be the matter. I hope nothing has gone wrong at the retreat.

"Why if we miss this deal to-night we may not have another such chance in a fortnight.

"Just think of it, \$150,000 in gold will come in on the 11:30 express and no one there to help them off with it. What a pity!

"The rascals, if I had them here I would throttle them all in my grip.

"I am certain my information is all right in regard to the money being on the express. Jim wouldn't send me word if it wasn't so.

"That Jim is a cute one anyhow, and to think that he is so trusted by the managers, takes the starch all out of me.

"Well when he has a job for me and my men he works for number one, you bet; but however we share well and I hadn't ought to grumble.

"But what in Sam Hill keeps the boys, is what is bothering me, just now.

"Shouldn't wonder but that they have gone off to do the job on their own hook. But they dare not. I would grind every mother's son of them if they dared disobey my orders."

Black Jack here ground his teeth together in a ferocious manner in way of emphasis.

"Yes, I'd make 'em rue the day that they'd mutiny on me. That I would.

"I can't stand this any longer, there must be some difficulty at the retreat. Its too bad the boat is not here, its too far to walk.

"I guess I'll give the signal again."

He again gave three owl hoots in a louder and more

prolonged strain than his former attempts. This time his effort was not fruitless for an answering response reached his ears from afar down the river.

"Ah! the hounds hear me at last and are coming.

"I'll pay them for keeping me here for nearly half an hour or my name is not Black Jack.

"They shall have short rations in both food and grog for this night's work in disobeying my orders."

When Black Jack reached the river bank the pursuers were not far off and only a few minutes elapsed before they had stealthily taken positions near by and watching his every movement, thinking that he was about to disappear from their view into some underground cavern unknown to them. They were shortly undeceived as to his being anywhere near his retreat when he commenced to soliloquize to himself and they heard everything that he uttered, wondering what new deviltry was on foot.

The detective was the only one that had a clear idea of what was contemplated by the robbers and he kept his own council until he could enlighten his comrades without being detected by the robber bandit.

In a few minutes the boat approached the bank, it contained twenty well-armed and fierce-looking men. One who seemed to be spokesman and who was giving out orders to the oarsmen was the first to address Black Jack.

"Ah! captain, we and the boys are sorry to have kept you here waiting; but we couldn't help it. We've had a high old time at the cave and you gave orders to hold the captive at all hazards, and in obeying these

orders we were late in coming to meet you as you directed us."

"Well, my man, what has been the difficulty at the cave that has kept you from keeping such an important engagement as we have on hand? I think I can judge better after I hear it."

"You see, captain, old Hagar went out to gather some herbs that she knows of that are growing down at the river to make a liniment of to fix on the wounds of Jerry, who you know was wounded in our last engagement when we attacked the stage, and Bilkins whose turn it was to stand guard near the captive's apartment was taken sick with the cramps and I told him he might go to his quarters, forgetting to place another guard instead of Bilkins, the captive was forgotten by us until old Hagar came back with the roots and herbs after a stay of two hours. On going into the prisoner's quarters she came out scared, looking as white as a ghost, the first time I ever see a nigger wench look white, and asked what we had done with the captive. Then, Cap., you had ought to see us boys scramble to our feet on learning that the captive was not in her room or could not be found about the cave, for we overhauled every place that a chicken might hide in. The fact of it is, Cap., we had been playing cards and indulging in grog and at first we were a little muddled, but when we come to our senses and knowing what would be to pay from you if the captive wasn't found, we sobered up amazingly quick, I tell you. We then held a council and went out in squads and in three hours after starting she was again in her apartments.

She had got nearly three miles away from the cave and had got lost on the prairie. I think she must have been going over the same ground for several hours or else she would have given us the slip."

"I must say you are all a nice lot of trustworthy followers, when you let an old negress and a girl pull the wool over your eyes. It seems that everything goes wrong when I am away."

"Now, Cap, don't be too hard on us, for you know we were off duty and enjoying ourselves; for you well know we haven't had much time lately to enjoy ourselves, and we were getting up courage for to-night's job."

"See to it in the future that you attend to matters better in my absence, or else I will find another more trusty than you are, my worthy lieutenant."

"Ay, ay, I will, Captain; I shall give you no cause to grumble at my neglect in the future."

"Then see that you don't. Is everything in readiness?"

"Yes! everything. The horses are ready, waiting on the other side."

"Then get ready to pull for the other side instantly; we haven't got any time to dally here longer."

Black Jack took a seat in the boat and the men pulled to the other side with a hearty good will.

CHAPTER XXV

CROSSING THE MISSOURI RIVER

After the departure of the robbers for the other side of the river, on their way to the robbery of the express car, the little band of watchers laid low in their concealment long after the last robber was lost to view.

The detective and his friends heard the boat grate on the other side. Coming from their hiding places they held a council as to what was best to be done under the circumstances, and as to whether they should follow or not. They all looked up to the detective to speak first, and seeing that he should say something, commenced:

"Friends, you no doubt have heard all that has been said by the bandits, but perhaps a little enlightenment would be in order, and as I am acquainted with the proposed job that these robbers are bent on accomplishing it would be best that all understood their plans exactly if we take a hand in stopping this proposed robbery. The way I understand this matter is this: A large amount of money, they are informed, is to come on the night express. They will put an obstruction on the track and wreck the train, and during the excitement that follows they will take the safe and make off with it. If they succeed in wrecking this train it will be at a sacrifice of human life, and I for

one am not going to stand idly by and see their hellish plans accomplished while I can lift a hand and fire a revolver. So, gentlemen, you have my opinion in the matter, and whoever wishes to join me can do so, for we have little time left to thwart the rascals."

Squint-Eyed Bob came forward and said:

"Gin us yer hand, pard; them air my sentiments, an' ye can count on me every time, you bet."

Robert, Arthur and Hugh all assented, and were eager to stop the villainy.

"Now," said the detective, "that we are all in the affirmative, we had best be making plans for crossing the river. Now, who can give us the best information on that point? I have no doubt but our friend here," nodding toward the scout, "can give us the best advice on this perplexing question. If you will be kind enough, friend, we would like to hear your views on the points."

"The river at this yere place is too deep to ford and pretty rapid for all on us to swim, so I see no other way outin the difficulty than fer one on us to swim across an' get that ere boat as these robbers used to cross."

"A good plan. I had not thought of the boat on the other side. But who amongst us here feels capable of making a success in breasting this swift current?"

Hugh, who had, during all the conversation, kept in the background, now came forward and said:

"Yer honor, faix an' it's this broth ov a boy, Hugh Muldoon, that could be afther swimming over this little brook. Shure an' it's not a dhrop to the big

rivers we have in the ould country that I used to be swimming them over back'ard an' for'ard jest for the sport ov the thing. Shure, an' wasn't it me grandfather, Lord rest his soul, who sailed with Lord Nelson, when he was shipwrecked on the coast of Gibraltar in an engagement wid the Spaniards, the best swimmer in the whole wurruld, fer didn't he, when he found himself in the wather an' not in sight ov land, swim all the way home to the ould country? He used to be takin' me on his knee when I was a broth ov a boy an' be tellin' me this, an' when I grew up I used to be practicin' in the Loche ferninst our door; an' when I was sixteen, shure, I could swim three times around widout breathin' even wanst."

With this he began to disrobe to make the attempt, while a smile could be perceived on the features of his companions.

"Now that this is settled, what about horses? And as I am not acquainted with the location of the railroad at the point that they propose to make the raid, I cannot tell whether we have to journey far from here or not," said the detective.

"The nearest point to the railroad track on t'other side is about six miles as the crow flies, and we shall need horses or not reach it in time to be of any service to the passengers. As fer horses, I know a ranchman named Pierre Zerlot, about a half mile up the river from here, who, for a small consideration, would let us have all the mustangs we want, and ef ye all think best I will go and get them."

"Then I will accompany you, and the boys can stay

here and give Hugh Muldoon a helping hand with the boat if necessary."

After seeing Hugh in the water well under way in his noble endeavor to reach the other side, they started after the mustangs.

A half-hour elapsed before they made their appearance with the horses; when they came into view of the river they found Robert, Arthur and Hugh sitting in the captured boat that the brave fellow had succeeded in getting over, idly rocking with the motion of the current.

"Ah! my fine fellow, I see you succeeded," said the detective.

"Yis, I did, yer honor, an' a sorry toime I had, too, ov it. Shure, the strame was swift, an' I landed on the other side a good way off from the blasted boat, that I did."

"Then, everything being in readiness, we must away. Arthur, you and your friend Robert take the bridles and hold fast to them, for the horses will have to swim for it, while we manage the boat. You will not have much trouble with them, as they are used to this mode of immigration."

A few minutes later the boat landed them on the other side; putting on the saddles which were taken off of the mustangs before they entered the water, they commenced their march to outwit the robbers.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE TRAIN WRECKERS

The small band of rescuers, after regaining the bank of the river in pursuit of the robbers and train wreckers, put spurs to their horses and made for the nearest point of the railroad, which was a deep cut through a rising knoll on the prairie, and it was supposed by them that it would be at this place that the wreckers would try to obstruct the track for the purpose of wrecking the incoming train; for no better place could be selected for such a purpose as the one chosen by the robbers, who knew every mile of ground traversed by the trains on the prairies near their dominions, of which they lorded over to the terror of railroad corporations, cattle drovers and immigrants; who, seeking new homes in the West, were waylaid on the prairies and robbed, and if they dared to defend their property by showing fight they were destroyed to a man.

When a report of these depredations ever crept to the eastern States reporters of papers and even the robbers themselves saddled it onto the Indians. It is true that the Indians themselves were nothing loath to commit such deeds when a chance was thrown in their way; but the majority of the deeds of horror that reached the eastern States were blamed to the

Indians, and the robbers took good care that they should be, by leaving behind them traces of an Indian massacre, thus shielding themselves from pursuit by the United States troops; who, when hearing of one of these blood-curdling butcheries enacted almost under their nose, always and invariably traced them to the limits of some Indian reservation; thus keeping the Indian commissioners and soldiers in a continual broil all the time.

When the Indians were called upon by the commissioners to explain their act they always pleaded innocence in the matter, and with an injunction to be careful in the future, or else the Great Father at Washington would not send them any more food or blankets for the winter's supply, but instead would send a detachment of his children armed with rifle and sword and drive them from off the face of the earth with the fury of a whirlwind.

The Indians were always very profuse in their promises in future behaviour, but as soon as the commissioners' backs were turned would commit even a more horrible butchery if a chance was thrown in their way; for they reasoned this way, as one young chief explained in a great council meeting at one time:

"If our Great Father blames us with our own deeds and all those committed by the bad white men, then why shouldn't we have the gain as well as the name? You send your children to watch us when they should be watching their own brothers. You do not take the advice of the poor Indian when he points out to you the work of bad white men; but because of traces

found near our lodges placed there by the hand of these bad men, you think the Indian speaks with crooked tongues, and the bad deeds committed must by your own neglect be laid at their door."

It was as this young chief had said; the commissioners and soldiers turned with a deaf ear to the warnings of the Indians, not believing that men of their own race were hardened enough to commit such deeds as they were often called upon to witness.

A ride of nearly half an hour in silence on the wiry little mustangs brought the little band of rescuers within a mile and a half of the cut. The fast approaching headlight of the train could be seen far out on the prairie bearing its living freight, little thinking of the destruction that awaited them ere a few minutes elapsed. No warning voice was there to whisper in the ear of the engineer of the peril to himself and his train, and on came the ponderous engine puffing and hissing in the night's stillness to be laid a shapeless mass of broken and bent iron in a few minutes.

With clenched teeth and abated breath the pursuers put the cruel spurs hub deep into their horses in order to instill new vigor into the now jaded beasts, in order to reach the goal in time to warn and save the doomed human beings; but their efforts were in vain.

Before the train entered the deep cut the detective arose in his stirrups, followed by his comrades, waving their caps high above their heads, trying to attract the attention of the engineer or fireman. They were seen by both engineer and fireman; but, thinking that

they were a hunting party and saluting them, paid no further attention to their wild capers.

A moment after the engine struck the obstruction placed across the track by the wreckers, and as the rescuers reached the bank of the cut, beneath them they could see a mass of quivering and writhing ruin, and as the hindmost coaches brought up against those in front with the suddenness of a thunderbolt, they were thrown and piled up in a pyramid and broken mass.

This pile of ruin catching fire from the heating stoves in the passenger coaches, a fire was started which lighted up the scene in a ghostly manner. The groans of the wounded mingled with the shouts of the robbers, and those that the hand of God saved from such a frightful fate, filled the air and froze the veins of the little band of rescuers; and a short time elapsed before they could go to the rescue of those suffering beings caged up in the coaches and pinned down by heavy timbers.

Hobbling their mustangs on the brow of the hill and turning them loose, they went down the steep bank, their revolvers in hand, ready for action. They noticed a large crowd of men around the express car, and the detective, recognizing Black Jack, turned to his followers and told them to spread out and fire their revolvers at the robbers in quick succession and make every shot effective. When they had taken their positions a volley of firearms rung out above the din, and the robbers, not prepared for this reception, were taken by surprise, and a second volley of bullets was

'Spreading out they opened fire on the Train Wreckers.'

(12)



sent in amongst them before they had time to take their revolvers from their belts and return the fire. They had only fired one volley at the rescuers when some of the train men set up the cry of, "The soldiers! the soldiers!" and the wreckers, supposing that a company of United States infantry had surprised them, turned from the scene and fled, leaving their dead and wounded behind.

The detective then spoke to Squint-Eyed Bob and said:

"I and my friend will follow the rascals to their den, and we will meet you at Baxter Springs to-morrow afternoon or evening and report success. You and your friends can stay and help these poor wounded creatures if you will; we will not try to do more than follow the robbers to their hiding place."

It being agreed that this was the best plan by both parties, the detective and Arthur set out to trail the robbers; while Squint-Eyed Bob, Robert and Hugh went to rescue the beings in the train disaster.

CHAPTER XXVII

ROBERT DISCOVERS COLONEL BLACKSTONE AMONG THE WRECK

When Robert and Squint-Eyed Bob and Hugh went to the assistance of the passengers of the wrecked train they were surprised to see those that had escaped standing idly by without lending their assistance to the train men, who were cool and collected and working with a will helping and comforting the imprisoned passengers by words of cheer while with their axes they were cutting and clearing away the heavy timbers that pinned them down as if in the jaws of a vise. Robert spoke up and said to the passengers in a loud voice:

"For shame, gentlemen. Would you see your fellow passengers die a lingering and painful death and perhaps being roasted to death by the rapidly approaching flames, before your very eyes without even lifting a finger to save them from a dreadful fate? To work, every man of you, and if you can't do much, have your conscience clear in the future that you did your best to save them from perishing."

"My chum is right thar," said the scout; "an' ef every mother's son on ye don't get to work this minute I'll shoot down the first man that disobeys his orders."

With this warning as a persuader the men fell to

DISCOVERS COLONEL BLACKSTONE 125

work with a good will, some putting out the fire and others with timbers began to pry up and relieve those of their fellows pinned down by heavy weights pressing down their limbs.

After relieving and rescuing all but in the last coach, Robert was acting as leader, and in advance heard a voice that he recognized.

"For God's sake, take this heavy weight off my leg and arm soon; its weight is killing me by inches with the pain and pressure."

The roof of this coach had fallen down on top of the seats. Robert gave the men instructions as best to clear an opening, and with heavy timbers they commenced to pry the roof off. In a short time this was done, and the sight that here met the eyes of the rescuers was sickening in the extreme. Men, women and children were torn and mangled; few in the coach of all its twenty souls were saved.

Robert looked around for the speaker whose voice he thought he recognized, and who called for help, but from the debris scattered around he could not see the person he was seeking, so he called out:

"Stranger, if you can speak, let us know where you are located."

"Here, here, near the end of the coach. Be quick, for I will die if not relieved soon."

Robert, Bob and Hugh jumped over the debris to the man's assistance, and clearing away the seat and timber that held him down pulled the stranger out of his prison of torture.

By the lurid light cast up from the burning coaches

Robert recognized the stranger whom he rescued as Colonel Blackstone.

"My God, Colonel Blackstone, you here and one of the passengers of this ill fated train?"

"Yes, Robert Folsom, my noble boy, I was unlucky enough to be a passenger on this wrecked train."

"Colonel, are you hurt bad that you wince so with pain?"

Before the colonel could return an answer he fell heavily forward against Robert, who caught him in his fall, and found that the colonel had fainted from his excessive pain. The three friends took the colonel between them and carried him to a smooth place on the bank, and Robert and the scout examined the colonel's arm and leg. His leg was cut in two places, and a deep gash on his thigh was discerned. The arm was broken at the wrist. The loss of blood and pain explained his faint.

Bob, used to dressing wounds, commenced to bind up those of the colonel's coat and bandaging up broken leg and arm with the same material as well as his rude skill permitted him to do. Hugh went off to get some water, and in a few minutes came back with his hat brimming over full, remarking:

"Be jabbers, the loikes of his honor niver dhrank out ov this koind ov a dish before, I'm afther thinkin', an' I'll take me oath he niver will again if he knows it. It's meself that thinks necessity is the mother ov invention."

Robert took the hatful of water out of Hugh's hand with a smile, and dashing some of the contents in the

colonel's face had the satisfaction of seeing the colonel open his eyes in a dazed sort of way. Then applying the hat to the colonel's lips, bid him drink, which he did, while a shudder ran through his frame at the thought of the ill-provised vessel he was drinking out of.

"Faix, upon me worrud, I'll bet it tastes as well as if ye wur dhrinkin' out ov a gould flagon, me jewel ov a colonel. Now, say yis, don't it?"

The colonel nodded with a smile to Hugh, who felt elated at being noticed by him.

"Now, colonel, do you feel better? My friend yonder," indicating toward the scout, "bound up your wounds while you were in a faint from loss of blood and the pain your wounds caused you."

"My noble boy, I cannot find words to thank you and your friends for the service you have all done me."

"Oh, say no more, colonel. We were only doing our duty toward a fellow sufferer; therefore you need not thank us for the little we have done for you."

"Humph, I would be more than inhuman if I did not give you and your kind friends a more substantial proof of my gratitude for the service you have rendered me than that of mere words of thanks—I, who can afford to do so, without missing it."

"For myself, colonel, I do not want pecuniary assistance at your hands; but my friends might not be of the same opinion as myself; and they can speak for themselves."

"Well, how is it with you, my friend?" addressing Squint-Eyed Bob. "Does your self-pride prevent you

from receiving a small present for the valuable service you have rendered me?"

"I kalkerlate not, kernel, ef you think as how we has earned mor'n yer gratitude an' ken afford tu gin us a reminder ov our meeting, I shall not refuse you, you bet on it!"

"Now, my friend, how you do take my promise of a return for your valuable services?"

"Yer honor, is it Hugh Muldoon that would be afther refusin' ye this wan little pleasure, when yer rollin' in riches, an' me not a cint in the worruld. Shure, an' I'd be a bigger fool than Dimmy the piper, who wonst saved Lord Carin from dhrowndin' bekase the Lord was too high-strung to recognize the piper before the event, an' who called the piper sich nice names when he was saved from dhrowndin' by the low fellow. Did yer honor think fer a minit that I'd be afther refusin' yer worship? Not I!"

The colonel could not help but smile at the Irishman's remarks.

"Now, you, Robert, your friends are not of the same opinion as yourself; so now speak up like the man I know you to be and tell we candidly what I can do for you."

"Never mind my ideas or cause for refusing your kind offer; but do the best you can by my two friends, and I will be satisfied."

"But have you no wish that you would like gratified? Remember that I have many friends in the East, and that money is all-powerful when used judiciously."

"Yes, Colonel Blackstone, I have a favor to ask at

your hands, that if you will you can gratify and make me the happiest of men, and an everlasting debtor of yours."

"Then speak right out, my boy, and if it is within the power of man, I will gratify that wish, if it takes half my fortune to accomplish it."

"Then, colonel, give me your hand on that promise of yours just made; you don't know how happy your word has made me, and my heart is light already."

Both the colonel and Robert shook hands over the fulfillment of the colonel's promise.

"Now tell me your wish, Robert. I am anxious to know what this wish of yours is."

"Not here, colonel; this is no fitting place to speak of it. I will tell you it before long; but not here."

"Well, well, have your way, my boy; but, upon my word, you keep me in the dark and set me to wondering what it can be. But how is it that I find you out here, Robert, and here of all places that I least expected to find you, and so fortunate on being here at this time of all else?"

"Oh, I was out in this locality attending to some business that called me here, when I and my friends heard the robbers plotting to wreck the train, but owing to circumstances we were prevented from reaching here in time to give warning and save the lives of these poor beings around us."

Then Robert gave the colonel a partial account of the overheard conversation of the robbers; of their

close proximity and of their trouble in crossing the river and obtaining horses to follow and outwit them if possible. The colonel heard him through with wonderment pictured on his face, and said:

"Is it possible that Arthur and the detective were with you when you reached the train?"

"Yes, even so! They have gone on the trail of the robbers, and to-night I hope to hear good news."

"Then I shall soon hear of my darling child?"

"Yes, and I hope you can clasp her to your breast, colonel."

"Oh, that will be joy indeed!"

"Colonel, if you think yourself equal to the occasion, we will journey toward Baxter; there you will get a doctor's care and your wounds dressed properly."

"I think I can stand the journey. Are you sure it is only eight miles from here?"

"Yes, I am sure of it."

"Then let us try and make the attempt. Let me lean on your shoulder, my boy. Ah, that pain! So, so! Ah! that's better."

"They had taken only a few steps further before the colonel said:

"I cannot stand this pain in my leg, my friend, and it will be impossible for me to go further. I am compelled to await the arrival of the special that has been sent for before I go on my journey."

"If we should carry you up to the top of the hill, colonel, do you think you could sit a horse?"

"I do not know. I might try; and as there will be

no train for two hours or more, it is perhaps best to try."

Robert and Hugh made a chair out of their hands by clasping them together. The colonel took a seat thereon, and clasping his well arm around Robert's neck was carried up the steep hill. The scout, who had gone in search of the horses, was awaiting their appearance.

They assisted Colonel Blackstone to mount one of the mustangs, and after he was seated they walked the pony a short distance to see if he could stand the journey by horseback. The colonel found that it gave him but little more discomfort in the saddle than on the ground, and told them that he was ready.

Robert said to his companions that he would walk along by the colonel's side; but neither the scout nor Hugh would listen to his proposition.

Here a war of words took place between the scout and Hugh as to who should have the honor of walking. Hugh for once getting his way, they commenced their journey to Baxter. Robert rode by the side of the colonel. The scout took the lead, picking out the even places on the march, and Hugh took his position in the rear, singing an Irish rollicking song by way of lessening the journey. Two hours after they reached Baxter Springs, and put up at the Planters' Hotel, a doctor was summoned and redressed the colonel's wounds, after which he was much more comfortable, and all that could be done to relieve the colonel was done by Robert and his two friends.

The hour was now getting late, and they now

repaired to the dining-room and ate a hearty meal, after which they bade the colonel good-bye and set out to meet the detective and Arthur on the colonel's suggestion; he being uneasy about them, and thinking that some misfortune or other might have befallen them.

CHAPTER XXVIII

MAUD'S ESCAPE AND RECAPTURE

We will now take the reader back to the cave and see what is transpiring there, and see how Maud Blackstone takes her captivity.

Maud is looking much paler than when we saw her last, when Richard Larkin held an interview with her. The effect of her confinement in a dark room only lighted up by an old oil lamp suspended from a small chain gave a ghostly cast to her countenance. The sun, now being high in the heavens, could not penetrate to her cell, except when the false door to the cavern was slid aside to admit or let out one of the band; and then only for a moment did its rays reach her.

She was wondering what was keeping Hagar from her side when that individual made her appearance in the entrance to her prison-room. Maud, seeing Hagar, said:

"Oh, Aunt Hagar, you have come at last! I was thinking just now of you. You are all of two hours late this morning, and I had begun to think that you were not feeling well."

"Oh, honey, dere is nuthin' ailin' old Hagar dat she know on; but ole Hagar am a-thinkin' dat sunthin' am de matter wid my chile Maud. Yo' looks pale like dis mornin'; am yo' sick, chile?"

"No, Aunt Hagar, I am not sick; but, oh! I'm so tired of this confinement. I fear I shall either go mad or die if I do not get my freedom soon."

"Don't spoke dat way, chile. All will come right in de Lor's good time; yo' jes' believe ole Hagar on dat."

"I do believe that the Lord will deliver us in His own good time; but, auntie, it is so terrible to be shut up here day after day without ever having a breath of pure fresh air, and at times I am almost ready to believe that our good Lord has forgotten us and left us to our doom."

"It do seem dat way to me too, chile, but den again I discards de thought, and I believes on again, an' prays to be forgiven for dem same thoughts."

"Oh, do try and let us escape some way out of here; that's a good Hagar, say that you will try."

"Ef I dare, I would, chile; let ole Hagar think a little while, chile."

"Oh, Auntie, I knew you would, you are so good; you will try to save me."

Old Hagar bowed her head, and shutting her eyes commenced to commune to herself. After a couple of minutes spent this way in meditation she raised her head and opened her eyes, remarking to Maud:

"Chile, I was a-prayin' to de Lor' to open a way to Hagar, an' de good Lor' seein' my distress an' yourn, He showed ole Hagar a way, an' it were in dis way: Dere am one de men sick an' wounded in dere, an' I will ax leave to gedder some yarbs down by de ribber to cure him, an' when I gets de permission to go, I

will give de guard what watches yo' a drink ob sumthin' to make him dreadful sick; an' when yo' finds him gone from de passage, yo' ken follow ole Hagar down by de ribber, an' we will také de boat an' make for de odder side of de ribber, an' den we ken go somewhar, I dunno whar, after dat; but we will go 'way, dat's all, an' leabe dese white trash behind us."

"Oh, Auntie Hagar, your plan is an excellent one, and we will succeed, won't we?"

"I hope de Lor' we will, so we pray to Him."

Both Maud and Hagar knelt down on the floor of the rocky cavern and prayed that their plan might succeed. If He heard their prayers He took His own good time to answer them; but after they arose from their kneeling position they both felt His influence around them, for their hearts were made lighter from the release to their minds, and a new peace entered their hearts.

"Now, Miss Maud, I'se a gwine to ax de permission an' prepare de drink, an' yo' stay here till I comes back to yo' an' tells yo' dat de time am come to go outen de world."

With this parting injunction old Hagar left the apartment, leaving Maud in her new-found joy.

An hour and over elapsed before old Hagar made her appearance. When she did she came in with beaming countenance, and by that Maud knew that she had succeeded.

"Hush, chile; don't say a word! Now am de time, so by de time dat I gets nigh de ribber yo' come out an' follow Aunt Hagar. Yo' mus' keep right in de

path to de lef', an' yo' can't make no mistake, an' I will meet you."

With this Hagar started off on her way to the river to await the appearance of Maud, who in her hurry to leave the cave far behind her forgot the advice of faithful Hagar and took the right path instead of the left one.

Old Hagar waited patiently for her coming until an hour had elapsed; then she commenced to gather her herbs and started back to the cavern. She entered Maud's room and found that she had left.

"Golly, de chile am done gone an' fo'got my advice an' taken de wrong path from here, an' am away out on de prairie by this yere time. I guess dis chile will go an' catch up wid her. I'se afeard de Injuns will catch her ef she don't have a protector, poo' gal. What a world dis yere am!"

Aunt Hagar went up the right path that led to the prairie land, and on reaching the top looked over the level tract of country; but Maud was nowhere in sight. Hagar walked along the bluff for nearly a mile up and down, but failed to find any traces of Maud. The sun began to hide itself behind the western horizon, then retracing her steps back to the cavern after a two hours' absence, she gave the alarm, of which we made mention in a former chapter.

CHAPTER XXIX

IN HOT PURSUIT OF THE ROBBERS

We left Arthur Blackwell and Crawford, the detective, following upon the trail of the train wreckers on the night of the train disaster, which was caused by the robbers placing an obstruction on the track for the purpose of derailing the train, in order that they might rob the express car of the \$150,000 supposed to be in the safe; and who were frightened off by the timely arrival of the little band of rescuers before they could get at the safe, which was buried beneath the ruins by other coaches being piled upon the express car. Thus the crime for which they sacrificed so much life and property did them no good, but, instead, placed their heads in the lion's mouth, as will be seen farther on.

It might have fared badly with the little band of rescuers if the robbers had known their numbers, for the robbers numbered four to one of the rescuers, and maddened by their greed of gold would not hesitate to have killed every one of the band of rescuers before they would have given up that for which they had already made so much sacrifice and destruction to accomplish their object; but the cry raised by one of the train men of "The soldiers, the soldiers!" and who actually believed at the time that the rescuers were

really a company of soldiers by the train men and robbers had the desired effect of driving off the human ghouls and perhaps saving the lives of both passengers and rescuers.

The detective and Arthur following directly on the heels of the robbers after decamping from the wrecked train, it was supposed by them on hearing the clatter of horses' hoofs behind them that they were being followed by a detachment of the soldiers, and instead of directing their horses' heads towards their retreat turned them in a contrary direction, in order if possible to gain time and throw their pursuers off the scent. Their horses being fresh from their long rest while waiting the approach of the incoming train, Black Jack had little doubt but that he could distance his pursuers and take a back trail, cross the river and thus cover up his tracks effectually before entering his retreat.

The robber chief little knew that a human bloodhound was on his scent, who knew all the subterfuges resorted to by men of his class, and knowing that they were leading him and his friend on a wild-goose chase made up his mind to outwit the robber chief in his own cunning.

Following the robbers a mile further on the trail, and now being seven miles from the place of starting, and knowing that the robbers were better mounted than himself and Arthur, the detective called out to Arthur to draw up and halt, saying:

"There is no use of using ourselves and horses up in what in the end will be a fruitless chase, for, in the

condition our horses are, they will eventually give us the slip."

"Do not give up the chase yet. Rather let our horses drop under us than to withdraw from their track."

"I thought you would be in favor of following on after the robbers, Arthur; but I have a far better plan than that in view, therefore we will withdraw from the pursuit in order to throw the robbers off their guard."

"Then what is your plan? I know you must have strong reasons for throwing up the pursuit of these marauders."

"It is this: A mile farther on the back trail I noticed that we crossed the road on the way to McGinnis' Ford, being called so by the shallowness of the Missouri River at that crossing, and there being no other such an one for over ten miles on either side of it, I am of the opinion that the robbers will use this in crossing before many hours pass over our heads."

"What reasons have you for thinking that they will cross the river at the Ford, when you are not certain on which side of the river they have their retreat?"

"I am certain that their retreat is somewhere on the other side of the river. My inborn instinct and the indications all point that way, and I am morally certain that I am not wrong in my conjectures; however, I am liable to be in the dark as well as any one else; but I shall follow my inward promptings until I am satisfied that I am deceived. If I have been led astray

by these inward promptings it will have been the first time since my initiation as a detective. Through their warnings I have succeeded; why should they fail me now?"

"You may be right in your conjectures, warnings or whatever you call them, and I hope you are. Have you had promptings of ultimate success in this, your new scheme, may I ask?"

The detective had foreseen for some moments past that Arthur had become rather sarcastic in his speech, no doubt caused from their withdrawal from the pursuit of the robbers, for Arthur could not help but think that such another chance as this one was likely to occur again, if they did not succeed in the detective's new plan. The detective, reading Arthur's thoughts aright, replied to his inquiry:

"Yes, I have had my promptings of ultimate success in this scheme, and in order to heed these inward prophecies of the mind or brain workings, I have withdrawn from what would have been a failure in the end, and have taken sides with this new plan for success, as you will soon foresee, my friend."

"Well, I hope you are right. However, we have no choice now in the matter, as the bandits are far out of our vision ere this, and we shall have the chance to test the fallacy of your new promptings."

"Be it so; then follow me."

The detective, a little nettled by Arthur's remarks, wheeled his horse around on the back trail.

Neither had spoken until the Ford was reached. The detective made a long scrutiny of their surround-

ings up and down both sides of the river, then at the clayey bottom land at his horse's feet.

"Ah! just as I thought. They drove their stock over the Ford yesterday. But why this mystery of the boat?"

Letting the bridle-rein fall on his horse's neck and folding his arms on his chest, he let his head drop forward, the chin resting on his breast. There he sat his horse for nearly fifteen minutes in deep meditation, as if in a trance and looking beyond the past and unraveling the future.

Arthur sat his horse and stared in wonderment at the attitude of the detective, thinking he had lost his reason. Then, becoming alarmed for the safety of the detective, he said:

"Mr. Crawford, are you unwell?"

The detective looked up, but gave no other indication that he had heard Arthur, and again fell into the same comatose state.

Arthur then reigned his horse alongside of the detective. Shaking the detective roughly by the arm, he cried out in alarmed voice:

"Come, come! wake up, my friend; day is breaking, and we should be on our journey. Let us away; come!"

The last word was said with a rough shake which nearly threw the detective from the saddle. Lifting his head up and shaking himself as a lion would his mane, the detective regained his rein and with a deep sigh said:

"Ah, Blackwell, I told you so! I have the whole

thing in a nutshell. I have worked out the knotty problem. I knew I was right!"

"Why, Crawford, I do not comprehend you. Of what are you alluding to? You speak in riddles, my friend."

"Ah, I forgot! Well, Arthur, when we reached this bank of the river I noticed two hoof prints you will see in the clay soil at your feet there. I at once conjectured that they were made by the robbers' horses the day before. How far I was right you shall judge, after you have heard me through. Seeing the footprints set me to wondering why the robbers did not ride their horses instead of going by boat, as we saw them do last night. This conundrum set my brain in a whirl of excitement to know the truth, and I have come to the conclusion in this wise: The robbers, not wishing to be seen in a body by daylight mounted on horseback, sent their horses in a drove accompanied by one of their band in the early part of the day, grazing the stock as they went along to the place of rendezvous. The robbers, when it became dusk, repaired to the boat, placing their saddles and accoutrements in the bottom. The last part of the play you have seen enacted; therefore I need not speak of it. Now, this Ford must be ten or twelve miles from where the boat landed last night to discharge its load of human freight, and where we crossed the river in pursuit of them. Putting all this together, I am certain that the robbers' retreat is on the other side of the river some miles above this, for I do not think it likely that they would row ten or even eight miles

up-stream; also, their retreat must be in some underground cavern on the opposite bank of the river from where we stand this minute, and we must find it."

Aye, that we must, and soon too, for I am getting anxious about Maud. You have, Mr. Crawford, certainly gained mastery over an important chain of evidence, and I am half a mind to believe in your forewarnings."

"Now, Arthur, as it is getting broad daylight, we had better cross the river and take up a position in that copse of shrubbery yonder to the left, where we will be hidden from the view of any one crossing the river. If we are seen they will not take us for other than we seem in our present garb: two genuine down-east Yankees, which characters we must play on the robbers if they show themselves while we are here waiting their appearance."

"We will do it, and let them have the laugh at our expense, while we are finding out their headquarters, and then, let 'He that laughs last, laugh longest,' as the old quotation reads."

CHAPTER XXX

THE RETREAT FOUND AT LAST

Detective Crawford and Arthur Blackwell had barely settled themselves in the shrubbery on the other side of the river, in wait for the appearance of the robber band, ere the sound of fast approaching thuds, as if made by a drove of cattle, reached their listening ears, high above the continual swash of the fast-moving waters of the river, and shortly the robber band came in view on the other side, headed by the robber chief and his lieutenant. When they had reached the river edge they stopped as if in consultation, while the sneezing and whinnying made by the horses, who, by the sight of the river, knew by true animal instinct that it was here that they could slack their thirst, and perhaps be allowed to brouse on the luxuriant grass along its banks; therefore, from the noise made by the horses, nothing of the palaver made by the robbers reached the eager ears of the detective and Arthur, who were soon to learn what that consultation between the robbers meant.

The robbers started up their horses, who needed but little urging to enter the stream. When they were well in, the horses, little minding the sharp stabs of the wicked spurs that were driven into their flanks by the heels of their riders, ducked their heads into the water and drank long and copiously of the water

before they would again move on. When the robbers reached the bank of the river occupied by the eager watchers, they turned their horses' heads into the chaparral on the other side of the path from which they were concealed. Reaching a small clearing between the bank and the river, the robber chief called a halt, and dismounting he was followed by the rest of the band.

Taking off saddles and bridles, they turned their horses loose; after hobbling them, they were led a short way up the river from camp, and were left to brouse on the grass. With a whinny and shake of delight, they fell to cropping the rich grasses while one of the band followed after them in their wake as they moved along.

Two of the band began gathering fagots for a fire, and very soon its blaze could be seen sending up its forked tongues, others were seen to cast out lines in the river, while three more of the band shouldered their rifles and took the back trail to the Ford road and went up to the plains in quest of prairie chickens or antelope.

Arthur and the detective watched the proceedings, and they were in a quandary as to what course to pursue, and had not reached a conclusion until one of the fishermen drew out of the river a nice large fish, followed soon after by another and another.

The detective then said:

"I declare, Arthur, the sight of them fish has made me decide on a course to pursue."

"The fish do look inviting to a couple of hungry

mortals who have fasted as long as we have, and I would be willing to run a little risk to obtain a square meal, even if shared with robbers and murderers. Starvation stops at nothing, you know."

"Then you are of the same opinion as myself regarding the inner man; suppose we strike camp and introduce ourselves as two lost orphans seeking our way back to Baxter?"

"Agreed; I am with you."

"Then mount and let us go into the midst of the cannibals to be devoured by these ravenous vipers."

"Not yet, you bet; but to show them what two twin Yankees can devour for them."

"All right. Come, and on the way I will commence a ditty by way of introduction, and I shall not let up until you open out your Yankee twang and I'll catch on, Mr. Arthur."

When near the robbers' camp the detective broke out with something of his own manufacture from his ever-ready brain, and in a lively and animated strain rattled it forth to the amusement and wonder of the robber band.

"Oh! here we are, two Yankee twins,

An' we jes' kem over the prairies;
From away down East in Maine,

An' as happy as two whitestraddles could be.
When first we kem outen the West

A big chap says: 'Yere, cully, pull down yer west!'
We didn't mind ther gerloot; we pulled his hair;

An' he called us two Yankee twins.

Fal de ral, de riddle—

"We've kem outen here the kentry to see,
 An' nary no Injun ken take our hair;
 For we'll kick him, we'll scratch him,
 An' stan' 'im on his head, like all get-out.
 There arn't no copper-colored varmint, nary a one,
 That's goin' tu frighten us out our pants,
 For ain't we the terror of the prairies?
 An' to hum we're called the Whitestraddle twins.
 Fal de ral, de riddle!"

As the last note of proviso song died away the two Yankee twins landed in the midst of the robbers, and Arthur, being in the lead, commenced to pull back hard on the rein as if to back out again, but only intended to make his pony unmanageable.

"Whoa, thar, Betsy! Gal darn yer hide, kent yer tell when yer among gentlemen? Didn't I learn ye better'n that? Thar, take that, yer gallavantin' galoot, and act better nex' time ye wisit yer frien's." With this Arthur sunk his spurs into the horse's flesh and the poor dumb animal, now really alarmed and smarting with pain, sprang into the air and made a lunge forward, scattering the robbers right and left in their endeavor to get out of the way. The detective sat his horse and roared out:

"Ha, ha, ha! That ere bruther on mine can't handle thet ere hoss Betsy, nohow, ye bet. Boys, I tell ye thet ere hoss is sum, an' blood du tell, ye know. Why, that ere hoss, when she gets it inter thet hed o' hern thet she ain't a-goin' tu stan', she ain't, so thet settles it, so ye ken bet yer bottom dollar on't every time an' win. Whoa, Nancy! Don't yer cut up none on yer monkeyshines like unto yer sister Betsy!"

Two of the robbers, taking hold of Arthur's horse by the bridle, commenced to quiet the animal, supposing it to be a vicious animal from its capers of a moment ago. After it had quieted down they led it into the group surrounding the detective. The robber chief, Black Jack, then commenced to question the twins, whom we will call by the names whose characters they bore.

"Well, my hearties, who are you, and where might you be going?"

Arthur spoke up:

"My august friend, away down in Maine, we're known as the Whitespaddle twins; out here I guess they hain't got nary a name fer us, fer they call us all kinds ov names from kentry pumpkin 'tu Settin' Bull, whosever'n thet may be. My name is Joshua Whitespaddle, an' thet ar is Ephrim, my bruther; an' as tu whar we're goin', I kan't answer thet, fer we don't know unless ye tell us."

"Ho, ho, ho!" laughed Black Jack, followed in chorus by the band. "I'll tell you: you're going right plum into that river there in two minutes from now."

"Oh! ye wouldn't harm two lone orphans as what's lost ther way, would ye?"

"That depends, my lads; if you can give us a better explanation of your appearance in our midst, why, you will be treated as one of us, if not a little souse in the river might help you to restore a lost memory."

Ephraim spoke up:

"Wall, friends, we was too skeert at first tu tell ye as how we cumed here, as we were not 'specting tu

meet nary one round yere. We cumed out West tu peddle joolry, an' las' night we opened our pack and commenced to sell our goods nex' ter the Golden Lion, in a place called Baxter Springs, an' arter we sold out our stock that night, we went into the Lion and took a smile, on the invitation ov the landlord, a Mr. Jim Blakely, as he introduced hisself tu us, an' arter drinkin' he invited us to sing an' play thar tu night tu 'muse the boys, he said. Then some galoot asked us ef we'd been tu see the white elephant an' tiger as big as an elephant, as what the Cherokee injuns had with them, about two miles from town outen the prairie. I says tu bruther Joshua when we left the ranch to go tu bed, 'Let us get up before daylight an' harness up our nags, Betsy and Nancy, an' go an' see the elephant'; an' now we've been out on the prairie fer four hours, an' nary an Injun nor nary an' elephant nor tiger have we sot eyes on 'ceptin' yerselves, meanin' no offense. Perhaps yer ken tell us where they air, fer we have a great hankering tu see them air beasts they du tell on, as bein' so big, an' tell us as how we ken get back tu Baxter tu sing an' play fer the Lion folk tu night, fer we don't want tu break our promise to Mr. Blakely, nuther."

"So you chaps are the ones who done the singing and playing last night at Baxter, eh? Well, your explanation is sufficient, as I happened to be in town myself and made one of your audience, my larks, therefore I know you do not speak crooked; but I don't see why a man should send you out here on a fool's errand, in regard to the white elephant and

tiger, for few men outside of those present know what those words imply; but I'll find out in time. So, strangers, let me welcome you into my camp."

This was rather more than the detective and Arthur expected from the robber chief, and they thought their disguise was seen through, and they suspected of playing a part; but in this they were deceived, as they very soon learned.

Then Arthur commenced the questioning in turn:

"I swan, Ephrim, we has kum all the way from the East tu be fooled by some chap; but jes' you wait till I sot my eyes on his gol durn pictur'; ef he don't remember me as long as he lives, then my name ain't Joshua Whitespaddle. But say, stranger, what might ye an' yer men be a-doin' out yer, anyhow?"

"Oh, I'm a cattle king, and those are my herders or cowboys, as they are called out here."

"But, I say, what is a cattle king an' a cowboy; du tell, won't ye? I an' Ephrim are dying tu l'arn."

"Why, a cattle king is a rich man who owns lots of cattle and a big ranch; and a cowboy is a man hired by him to do the herding and also to drive the cattle to market."

"Wall, I du declare! Who'd 'a' thunk it! Kings out yer on the prairies! By gum, when we make enough ouden our jooelry speculation I'm goin' tu buy cattle with the proceeds, jes' you crow on thet, ain't we, Ephrim?"

"Ye ken gamble on't, Joshua! An' I'll go hum an' marry my gal. Won't we be some, though!"

"But, pard," said Arthur, addressing the chief, "where be you a-goin', an' du yer live at Baxter?"

"No, I don't live at Baxter, but only a few miles from there, and when breakfast is over we will commence our journey, and if you both wish, you may join us in a meal, as the boys seem to have good luck in fishing and there is no knowing what the boys will bring back with them whom I sent out hunting, and there is more than enough provender in the saddle-bags, so you will both have a chance to whet your appetites soon, and I'll guarantee that I and part of the boys will hear you sing and play on the banjo in the Golden Lion to-night; for if you wish to accompany us a far as we go, we will start you on the right trail back before we leave you, so that you cannot miss your way again and get lost."

"Gehosephat! Gin us yer han', pard. Ye make me glad all over. By gum, I must screech; I must crow! Three cheers for the red, white an' blue, an' a tiger too fer ther king!"

Arthur giving his cheers and a tiger for the chief, Black Jack, and the flag; after which he flopped his arms at his side like a rooster, and in a loud voice crowed like that bird, to the amusement of the robbers gathered around.

He did credit to the bird, for it was the joy of their success with the robbers and the prospect of soon being able to discover the hiding place of Maud Blackstone that called forth his cheers. For the guaranty of the chief in saying that he would meet them in Baxter in the evening stilled

any fears that they might have had that harm was intended them.

The three hunters sent out by the chief now entered camp, bringing on their shoulders two nice antelopes and three brace of prairie chickens, which they had succeeded in killing. They were relieved of their burdens by the willing hands of those told by the chief to prepare the game for breakfast; and the arrival of the huntsmen being the signal for the fishermen to stop, now also came forward and deposited their game, consisting of sixty-four fine plump fish, more than enough for two good meals.

Less than a half hour a plentiful supply of roasted antelope meat and fish was spread on bark and served out to the band and the strangers, by those acting as cooks. A second course of corn bread was then served out, and this last, with hot coffee, made up the bill of fare.

Arthur had here a chance to see western life in all its nakedness, and far better than he could have gleaned from books.

The robbers tore the meat from the bones with the savageness of wolves, gulping the meat down without taking the trouble to even masticate it before swallowing. So ferocious and quick were the robbers in eating, that Arthur and the detective had hardly commenced their meal before the entire band were through, with the exception of the chief, who they perceived was more dainty in eating than his followers, and must at one time have seen better days and led a different life from that which he was now following

Part of the band, from a word from their chief commenced to break camp, and a few started out to recall the herder with the stock, and by the time they again made their appearance with the animals, Arthur, the detective and the chief had finished their meal.

The horses were brought to the river and watered, and in a twinkling saddles and bridles were placed on them by the well-drilled band, and now commenced the march.

For eight miles they journeyed on toward Baxter, and when within sight of the town the chief ordered a halt and riding to the rear of the straggling band, where the detective and Arthur had lagged behind, to further their purpose. When he came up to them he said: "Friends, we will have to part here. You can, by looking ahead, see Baxter in the distance, and there is no reason why you should not be comfortably settled in about half an hour, even if you do not go much faster than a walk. So bye-bye; we shall meet to-night."

Arthur replied:

"Stranger, I thank ye in the name of my bruther an' myself, an' we shall not ferget yer treatment of us, nuther."

"Tut, tut! never mind that. Be off with you now!"

"Then so long, an' tu night we'll drink yer health at ther Golden Lion."

While the chief and Arthur had been speaking the band passed from view around a boulder, but not before the detective caught a glimpse of the last man

and the point marked indelibly on his mind; he also noticed that where they now stood a small but well-worn path led a short distance up the hill, but could not see where it ended.

Arthur, when they had got through speaking to the chief, was surprised not to see the band in sight, but he kept his council and said nothing nor even showed his surprise to the chief, whose eye watched him closely.

Black Jack stood where the detective and Arthur had left him until they were well on their journey. Several times on their looking around they still saw him standing at the same place. After a few minutes they entered some thick foliage which hid them from the view of the robber; he then disappeared, as the rest had done.

When the detective found that they were hidden from view he motioned for Arthur to halt, and told him what he had seen.

"Now," said the detective, "we will ride on a little farther, and if we are watched this feint will put them off their guard; and we can hide our horses somewhere and take the back trail on foot, and by doing so we will be less likely to be discovered by any one of the band, and can more easily hide if we should discover any one who might be placed as a guard watching or expecting us to return out of curiosity."

"Yes, let us do it, and this time find out for a certainty the robbers' retreat before we leave the ground."

They walked their horses a short distance, and

finding a good place where they could tie them without fear of their being discovered they took the back trail.

They walked along without speaking to each other until they reached a point near which the detective had seen the robbers disappear, but nothing was there to indicate a cavern or any habitable place, only a solid perpendicular wall of rock loomed up to their view, showing only a high smooth face and here and there a little stunted shrubbery, and rock moss could be seen growing in the crevices on its face.

Nevertheless, they were not to be disappointed in their quest, and selecting a good place where they could hide without being seen, waited.

An hour went by, and still another followed, and the sun, now high in the heavens, poured its hot rays down on them, but still they lingered on, hoping that some indication of life would open to their view and reveal the robbers' retreat, for they were both certain it was near at hand, but hidden from them.

Arthur was just on the point of asking the detective to let him go out and hunt around the rocks and shrubbery; when a large portion of the face of the perpendicular rock they had been looking at for some time past slid back as if by magic, disclosing a hollow aperture, and the robber chief and one of his men, mounted on two superb animals, made their exit from the cave. When they entered on the path the great screen covering the mouth of the cavern closed again, and the rock looked as if nature had fashioned it thus.

The robber and his companion passed within almost arm's distance of those laying concealed watching their every movement.

When they had passed out of earshot, Arthur said:
"Thank God! found at last!"

CHAPTER XXXI

LARKIN'S ESCAPE FROM A WATERY GRAVE

Richard Larkin, the reader will remember, who on the night of his desperate attempt on the life of Robert Folsom, in the Golden Lion, and his hasty departure from the scene, followed by the trio, Squint-Eyed Bob, Robert Folsom and Hugh Muldoon, and of his being cornered on the bank of the Missouri River, in their efforts to extract information from him as to the hiding place of Maud Blackstone, of his frightful leap into the boiling and surging waters of the river rather than impart the information to his rival.

Richard Larkin, when he made his plunge into the waters of the river, allowed himself to be carried down stream with the current, which was running at this point at the rate of twelve miles an hour; his only danger was the striking of a sunken rock while underneath.

Larkin was an excellent and expert swimmer, and he was like a fish in the water; but at this season the waters were very muddy and almost ice cold from the heavy rains and storms which swept over the country but a short time before, and he found it no easy matter to sustain himself under the muddy and frozen water.

He allowed himself to be carried by the current for nearly sixty feet, when he struck a sunken waterlogged

trunk of a tree, which he clung to with desperation, and allowed himself to float to the surface. Using the log as a shield, he looked around him carefully and took his bearings.

He could see his three enemies yet on the bank watching for his reappearance. The scout was coming towards him, but he did not fear a discovery, for he could slip in the water on the opposite side of his shield and thus defy detection, as he was some fifteen feet away from the shore; but his limbs were becoming numb from his long immersion in the water, and if the scout staid near his position four or five minutes he would surely have to succumb to the inevitable, or give up to his enemies.

When the scout gained a position on the bank opposite to that of Richard, he stood looking at the float for a few minutes and ejaculated:

"Wall, I swan! I cud a swared I seed sunthin' move near that air floatin' log, but, howsomever, I guess I was mistaken. Anyway, I guess I'll fire a shot at it an' as I can't peer on 'tother side, a ball might bring some news."

He raised his revolver as he spoke, and a shot from it broke the stillness of the night and brought a cry from a frightened screech-owl; but no other indication of life was discerned.

He turned on his heel and walked back to his companions, and Larkin, once more coming to the surface from his concealment, heaving a long sigh of relief, said:

"A close call. I must get out of this or I'll make

food for the fishes soon, if I don't. That fellow's shot came too near to be pleasant, and a prospect of another call is not inviting, I assure you, Richard, my boy. So avant out of this."

Saying this he shoved himself away from his position and made for the shore, reaching which he dove into the undergrowth and sped away into the darkness, following the river's course down stream.

After he had gone about a mile from the place of his encounter with the three friends, he reached a level place and at some distance from the river bank. He commenced to gather twigs for a fire, remarking:

"I cannot enter camp in this plight to be laughed and scoffed at by the robber band. I want to keep dark until the thing is over, and then away from this forever.

"The hounds! I will make them pay dearly for this night's work, or my name is not Richard Larkin.

"After I take my departure from here with Maud as my wife, I shall set a price on each of their heads and put Black Jack and his wolves on their trail. Ha, ha, ha! won't I be revenged, though!

"Their day to-day; mine to-morrow!"

And Richard rubbed his hands before the hot fire in anticipation of seeing his threats take shape in the glowing blaze before him.

The three friends waited on the shore for nearly an hour after the disappearance of Larkin in the river, and then giving up the search retraced their steps back to Baxter, searching every available hiding place on their way with a hope that they might find Richard hidden somewhere.

They were certain that he did not drown in the river and ere this was perhaps in the retreat.

So while Richard was drying himself by the fire and plotting the destruction of the three friends, they were walking away from him and leaving him in perfect security to carry out his threats.

Richard now being thoroughly dried and warmed strode off in the darkness again in the same direction as before, downstream, muttering to himself:

"The minister I sent after must reach here to-morrow, and ere sundown to-morrow Maud Blackstone shall become my wife, and my revenge will be complete, and her millions will be mine. Oh, glorious morn! cast out thy brightest rays and let all nature smile in its gladness, for to-morrow I will possess a passport to Colonel Blackstone's millions!"

As if in answer to his prayer, day broke in the East and sun shone forth soon after, proclaiming to all a new day.

CHAPTER XXXII

RICHARD JOINS THE BROTHERHOOD

Reaching a point near where the detective and Arthur had seen the robbers disappear as if swallowed up in the bowels of the earth, Larkin stood looking around and viewing the landmarks near him, and talking to himself.

"This must be near the secret stairway that Black Jack made me acquainted of. Why not enter the cave from this way, if I can find the opening? Let me see, the directions were, a large cone-shaped rock marked the position of the place. I know the main entrance farther up, but while here and having time to spare and not caring to go amongst them before they are astir, I might as well go in by this way, for who knows how soon I may want to use this new passage as a means of escape or as a retreat. It is better to become familiar with all their modes of egress or ingress in and out of their burrow."

"Ah! I see the stone that acts as a landmark. Now to act upon the other directions. Take ten steps due east and stamp on a small flat stone three times. Why, the whole thing is simple enough. Here is the flat stone; surely the directions are simple enough to follow. Now let us see how the opening to the cavern compared with the rest."

Larkin began to stamp the three times on the surface, but no opening opened to his view. He was amazed.

"Well, I guess there is something else to be done, or perhaps I didn't knock hard enough. I'll try again."

This time he knocked harder, and a clicking sound reached his ears and Larkin stepped back from the slab. In a moment more, with a loud snap, the slab slid to one side with terrible force and revealed a stairway to Richard's view. Entering the passage and going down the stairs, which were quite steep, he reached a narrow passage branching off to the right and left.

"Let me see; I was to take the right-hand passage, but I guess I'll take the left for a short distance, as I am curious to know where that leads to."

He stepped off the bottom stair where he was standing. The moment he did so the trap above closed to with a loud snap and left Richard in total darkness.

"Ha! I had forgotten about the last step, and it takes half an hour before it winds up again. I should have procured a light in the recess before I took the last step; however, I guess I can regain it."

Richard fumbled about in the dark for several minutes before he met with success. His hand came in contact with a small opening in the rock; in this recess he found several lanterns of bull's-eye pattern. Taking one, he lighted it, and turning into the passage to the left went on his way of discovery.

He supposed that he must have traveled several



“With this iron I brand you as a member of the Brotherhood.”



hundred yards before the path he followed diverged to the right and he saw a light directly in his path.

Turning back the slide of the lantern, he picked his way along carefully, guided by the light ahead in the passage. Coming closer, he heard the hum of voices and the clinking of metals.

Richard, supposing that he was about to come amongst the members of the band in council, checked himself and advanced along more stealthily towards them.

A few feet further on he came in full view of supposed council chamber.

The view that met his eye in this room filled him with wonder. Around the room, which was a large one, sat men engaged in different occupations, while several lithographers' presses as well as several small printing presses and different kinds of machinery took up a good share of the middle of this room. A large portable forge stood in one corner, and it was being operated by two men, while two more near by received the work done at the forge and placing it in a die in a trip hammer. The article, a small round piece, went around the room to the different mechanics employed on its manufacture and stopped on its way near two experts, who with large, strong magnifying glasses and scales were testing each piece as it came through on its journey to them.

Richard now came to the conclusion that he was in another part of the cavern used as a counterfeiting room and another branch of Black Jack's business, of which he was in utter ignorance up to this moment.

He was not sure of his surmises, as of all the men before him not one familiar face could he recognize, therefore he thought it best to be cautious for a while and await developments. A few moments of silence passed to Richard, who in his cramped position was wishing himself well out of the cave, when Black Jack, followed by his lieutenant, made their appearance, from where, Richard could not see from his position.

A murmur of recognition from the workmen was given to Black Jack and his lower on their appearance, and one of the experts left his desk and went forward to meet the chief.

Richard now arose and came forward, while a threatening scowl from all present was cast upon him.

"Ha, Larkin, how came you here?"

"Well, Captain, I came in by the secret entrance you were so kind to acquaint me of, and I must have taken the left passage instead of the right one, and here I am at your pleasure."

"It's all right, boys, only I didn't intend that he should know of this industry while in our society. He is one of us, anyway, but to make sure you might initiate him into this order, as the other oath does not connect this."

Ay, ay; that we'll do, captain, right off, after which his nibs can look around till he becomes gray, for all we care. Once he is one of us, his neck will be in the same halter, and by his oath and his signature to it, it will place him in a worse light than it does us. So let him take care that he does not break faith with us afterward."

This last was said by the expert who had approached the chief.

"Boys, take a recess and prepare for the reception of the stranger as one of us. For I want his initiation to take place immediately."

The workmen stopped work and drew around Black Jack, also inclosing Richard, the lieutenant and the expert, who seemed to have charge of this department and run things much his own way.

The expert called two of his men forward, and bade them prepare for the test. They took their position on either side of Richard and drew from their concealment two bowie knives and pointed them at Richard. Up to this time he thought that the bandits were using pleasantries at his expense merely as a joke, but he now perceived they were in earnest.

The speaker now bade Richard bare his breast, which he reluctantly did. He then repeated a horrible oath which we will refrain from here repeating, but suffice it to say that at its finish Richard, although hardened, could be seen to visibly shiver as its recital progressed, and at its finish he was rather pale. The speaker continued:

"Do you still wish to become one of the brotherhood?"

"I do!"

"Then you want the recognition mark placed on your bosom?"

"Yes!"

"Do you intend to stay with the brotherhood after joining, or to leave after you do your business up, the

import of which the chief informs me you are here on?"

"I intend to leave as soon as that business is transacted."

"Why do you wish to leave us?"

"Because I will have more than enough of the stuff for which you are now periling your lives."

"Ah, I see! You expect to become rich by this marriage?"

"Yes; I have not the least doubt."

"You will think of us when you are rolling in wealth? Substantially, I mean, if called upon to donate for the good of the cause, or use your influence if a brother gets in peril?"

"According to the oath I should be compelled to, for it embodies all this."

"Bring the brand of brotherhood, Charlie."

This was addressed to one of the men who had been busily engaged operating at the forge. When called by the speaker he came forward, holding in his hand a branding iron three inches square and heated to a cherry red.

"With this performance we complete the exercises of your initiation, Mr. Larkin, and I hope you will be a man instead of taking the part of a weak woman and give your brothers a chance to laugh at your expense." With this taunt, he told the man holding the brand to apply it to Richard's breast.

The hot iron was placed against Richard's breast for a moment. A sizzling sound was heard and smoke ascended from the wound. The iron pulled away, a

red blistered wound was disclosed to view. On inspection the brand stood out on the flesh clear and distinct.

Richard felt sick and faint, and a glass of pure spring water was given him to drink. The speaker, as we call the expert, then said:

"Perhaps, Mr. Larkin, you would like to see the monogram you have had branded on your breast before we take the final oath?"

Richard nodded assent.

"Then, Charlie, open up to his gaze a counterpart of his mark on your breast."

The man did as he was bidden, and revealed to Richard's view a horrible scar: a bleeding heart, with two daggers passed through it crosswise, and underneath two clasped hands, and in a circle over all, the words, "True 'till Death."

Richard, on beholding this, was beside himself with rage, and cursed his cupidity that led him into this passage to learn its mysterious windings.

Black Jack now spoke up in a hilarious manner:

"Now, lads, wake up and welcome your new-found brother, and in the meantime trot out the refreshments and show him you can treat him in a royal way if you are in Satan's pit."

One by one the counterfeiters passed before him, taking him by the hand and giving it a hearty shake.

The hand shaking being over, the speaker sprinkled something out of a bottle on a cloth and applied it to the scar. The substance had an instantaneous effect on the wound, all pain ceased on its application, and Richard became himself once more.

A bell sounded, and one of the partitions slid away, revealing another room larger and more commodious than the one they were now in; a table was spread, and everything around this room looked gorgeous and rich.

Black Jack approached Richard, and taking him by the arm said:

"Come, let us to banquet, after which I will show you the mysteries of the cavern!"

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE MYSTERIES OF THE CAVERN

To say that Richard Larkin was amazed at the gorgeous display before him would be mildly putting it. For a moment he was bewildered, not wishing to believe his senses, and thinking that he was in the land of dreams. He looked around him when he entered the new room leaning on the chief's arm. His foot trod on a beautiful rich velvet carpet, a costly chandelier containing over one hundred lights, lighting up the spacious room in a brilliant manner and reflecting on the stalactites overhead, which hung in groups from the high ceiling and resembled a fairy grotto. The curtain separating the counterfeiting room or workshop was on this side a vast piece of beautiful silken drapery, while on the other side facing the workshop was painted to represent a rough rocky partition.

A long table in the center of the room was teeming down with a load of rich eatables, while glass decanters sported wines of different tints, and not a few more held ardent spirits to suit the taste of the participant. A large fire of coal was burning in a big burnished grate whose warmth sent a cheerful glow through the room and took away the cavern chilliness. In a small room off from this main one, Richard

noticed Old Hagar pass and repass the entrance and keeping up a continual jibberish to her assistant preparing the viands for the repast.

Around the table the men stood waiting for their chief to be seated at the head before they seated themselves.

Black Jack broke the silence by asking of the speaker:

"Has Julia come yet?"

"Yes; she arrived over an hour ago, but she was fatigued and went direct to her apartments on learning that you had not yet reached here. She begged to be appraised of your presence on your arrival."

Then send Hagar to have her come to the banquet immediately, that we await her presence."

"I have already done so several minutes ago. You may expect her every moment."

A rustling of silk and the swash of a dress sweeping the rocky floor was heard in a passage without, the heavy curtain to a small entrance was lifted aside, and a very beautiful lady dawned upon them. To Richard's imagination she was the most beautiful of women.

"Oh, papa, I am so glad you have come!" With this she ran to his side and kissed him.

Black Jack's countenance wore no longer the savage and ferocious look, but instead his face was beaming in smiles. Holding his daughter in his arms he held her away from him at arm's length for a moment, and looking into her eyes as if trying to read her innermost soul, he said:

"Julia, have you come back to me heart whole?"

"Yes, papa; I found no one whom I could love better than you, my father."

"Thank God!"

This was a strange remark, coming from the source it did. It would have sounded better if he had thanked the gentleman in whose service he was in. Turning to the assembly, he said:

"Brothers, as most of you here present seem to be quite anxious from your looks, I will here make a little explanation for the benefit of the new members of five years back.

"This is my daughter Julia, the only living relative that I have living. Five years ago we were hotly pursued by the government from an eastern State, and having to take a hasty departure from thence I left my daughter in the hands of a trusty servant to place her in the best ladies' seminary he could learn of. He was referred to the Fort Edward, N. Y., Institute as being the best of its class, and at this place she has been for the five years past up to within a few months ago. She is the daughter of your chief and the queen of the band. See that she is treated as such."

Larkin and one of the experts were formally introduced to her. Richard and Julia looked at each other in a way that could not be mistaken. It was love at first sight.

The rest of the band were named over by her father as they filed by saluting her by a wave of the hand.

"Now, as we all understand each other," said the chief, "let us eat and be merry of the banquet pre-

pared in honor of Julia's return amongst us, and as she will probably rule you with an iron hand as of yore, I will give her the reins for a short time."

Seating himself at the head, Julia at one side of him and Richard at the other, feasting commenced, and toasts given and received by the chief and his fair daughter Julia; but Julia had eyes or ears only for Richard, with whom she seemed to be smitten.

"Now, Larkin," turning to him, "as all interest here is done, I will show you the mysteries of the cavern as I promised you, and as my daughter is a stranger also to its mysteries, I will take more interest in my explanations, and my pleasure will be to show you both every point of interest connected with this vast cavern, of which so little is known to the outside world."

"Parkswell, and you, Simmons, lead the way," and taking his daughter's arm and followed by Richard, they entered the workroom, which we attempted to describe particularly on Richard's first appearance.

The piece of metal which he had seen the men busily engaged on when he came into view was a piece of spurious coin made to represent our ten-dollar gold piece, and was a very good counterfeit, only lacking weight to be genuine.

They were shown the different processes of its manufacture by the willing Parkswell, who was no other than the speaker or master of ceremonies at the initiation.

"How many have you now on hand and ready for shipment of the bogus tens, Parkswell?" said Black Jack.

"We have now in the neighborhood of two hundred thousand boxed up and ready for transportation."

"Then you may prepare the boys to flood the market with them this coming week. Together with the paper stuff, which you tell me is also ready, you have of it nearly a like amount, and you will not need to manufacture more for six months to come."

"You and your boys can work Europe while I and my angels do up the West. You know we are too well known there to be of any use in the East, so you can take it in on your way."

"Last year the Scotland Yard detectives followed some of the boys pretty close, on account of the acquaintance they made. But they were each time thrown off the scent by the arrest of one of the boys, who, on being searched, it was found by his papers and letters that he was only a rich farmer's son with more money than brains, that was seeing the world and spending dad's hard-earned dollars."

"Another of the boys was arrested in Paris. On search it was found by papers he was looking for a lost sister, who had come with a family as governess and had disappeared from Paris and couldn't be traced. He was enlisting everybody, storekeepers, secret service men, lawyers and doctors in his cause, and spending money like chaff."

"I took in Baden Baden, and at the gaming table, a place I could most always be found in for six months, they named me the American Montezuma. I lost a great deal of the bogus bills and coin, but I took away

more good money than any three of the boys—eh, captain!"

"That you did, Parkswell, let me see—your earnings alone were sixty-four thousand dollars. You must have swamped them Baden Baden fellows in American money. It's no wonder that our government's been on the watch for some time past; so we must work a new racket."

"Well, I and the boys did pretty near as well as all of you, although you had the largest and best field."

"That you did, captain, and your idea and management of the whole affair was a good one, and it can be worked again as successfully and even on a broader scale than the last."

"Yes, I think I could buy up two hundred thousand head of cattle this spring instead of one hundred thousand head, as last."

"We have a pretty large herd to keep up appearances, and I am known as the next largest owner of cattle to Prierly, the cattle king. Little does he know our standing in the vigilance committee."

Richard heard this without moving a feature. He held his council rather than betray himself to the chief.

"Ah! by the by, I would like to show Mr. Larkin the new ten and five script—a very fine imitation of the government bills, and an expert would laugh at you if you should tell him they were counterfeit."

A new crisp ten and five dollar bill was placed in Larkin's hand. To him they seemed to be the genuine article, and if not told of their baseness by these

counterfeiters he would believe them the genuine article, so well were they executed.

"You smile, my boy," said Black Jack, and well you may, for they are beauties and the peers of any spurious bills uttered on the market, and it is no wonder we have such little trouble in their utterance."

"Now, Simmons, lead the way to the still."

They took their way through the same passage for a short distance till they came to the place where Richard made the turn and discovered the light.

Simmons, being in advance, pressed a spring and a door flew back, revealing another passage. Entering this, they took but a few steps before it led them into a large room, equal in size to the main entrance.

Large vats for distilling purposes were here revealed to the eye, and Richard and Julia were both surprised at the number of casks, both full and empty, that were piled upon each other in this room or warehouse.

"Would you believe it, Larkin, we manufactured nearly thirty thousand dollars' worth of whisky last winter in this room, and the boys did right merry work, for they were in their glory here."

"Simmons, see that those barrels go to Mike Deveraux in the morning."

"Aye, that I will, captain, and not forgetting that he owes us five hundred dollars for the last consignment, too."

"How much have you on hand now, Simmons?"

"Something over four hundred barrels, all told, captain."

"Now, let's be getting back. I have business of importance with the men in the main chamber. Perhaps, Julia, you would like to go with me?"

"Not now, father; I am tired and will rest a while."

"Very well, suit your own convenience. Larkin, I suppose you would like to go and see if your messenger has returned or not, no doubt, and would like to visit the fair captive," with a sly wink at Richard.

"Yes, it is about time that the messenger made his appearance. I would like to visit the captive and see if she has yet changed her mind."

"A fair captive Why, papa, you did not tell me that you had a captive confined here!"

"Why, puss, I didn't have time, but later in the day I will tell you all the particulars. But suffice it to say that the prisoner is Mr. Larkin's, and perhaps he will let you be one of the bridesmaids, for, if I mistake not, they are to be married to-day. So kiss me good-bye, Julia, and go and take your rest."

By this time they reached the main entrance, and Julia disappearing to her apartment, the chief, followed by Richard, stepped into the main entrance, and the first object their eyes encountered was the minister's visage, all travel-stained and in a most deplorable plight to look upon.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE MEETING OF THE FRIENDS

The reader will remember that Robert Folsom, Squint-Eyed Bob and Hugh Muldoon, after leaving Colonel Blackstone in comfortable quarters at the Planter's Hotel in Baxter Springs, started out to find tidings of Arthur Blackwell and Crawford the detective.

Fearing that some peril menaced them, or else they would have kept their appointment with them as agreed upon, after they were well out of sight of the Baxter folk they started their horses up to a breakneck pace and never drew rein until they had reached the river at the point where they had seen the robbers cross the river on the previous evening; hoping that at this place they might gain some clew to the whereabouts of Arthur and the detective.

On reaching the river bank they dismounted, and the scout made a tour of the neighborhood for signs of a relanding of the robbers, but no such signs greeted his eager eyes. He shaded his eyes and looked across the river to the place where they had left the boat, and he could yet see the outlines of its outer edge peeping out of the brush where they had left it after using it to cross the river in pursuit of the robbers, and by this he knew that neither the robbers nor his friends had used it again in crossing the river.

Returning to his friends, he passed the waterlogged tree in the river at which he made the shot on the night of Richard Larkin's escape.

Robert and Hugh coming up to him while he was gazing at the sunken log, he said, while pointing with his finger:

"Robert, it were at the ere log what I made the shot at tother night, an' I could have swared that I seen somethin' or tother bobbin' up an' down behind it before I shot."

"It might have been the shadow of the log on the water that you saw, friend Bob," said Robert.

"It might; but howsomever, I can't get the idea it were it yet."

"It moight have been the ghost of Larkin, phat come back afther dhroundin', fer it's meself thet's afther thinkin' that the ould boy wouldn't kape him long wid him in his pit, be jabbers," said Hugh.

Robert ran down stream about twenty feet from where they were standing. Stooping down he picked up a white handkerchief stained with blood and held it up for the inspection of his friend. Bob and Hugh coming forward to meet Robert, the scout reached forward and grasped the stained handkerchief, remarking as he did so:

"Thet ere han'kercher tells the tale. It air the identical one thet the rascal tied roun' his wounded han' at the Golden Lion when I winged him."

"Yes, from this silent evidence before us, we know he has made his escape from the river, and is yet alive to do more harm," said Robert.

"The murtherin' blagard of a thafe of the wurruld! It's meself thet's got a score to settle wid him, an' it's Hugh Muldoon thet never went back on his wurd, nuther."

"Hugh," said Robert, "you must leave this rascal to me; I will deal with him in good time."

"You hev got ther biggest claim tu his carcass, Mister Robert, an' we acknowledge ther corn, but if he crosses my path arterwards, yer may gamble thet his name is bones, or sunthin' else."

"But this yere discussin' thet Larkin ain't findin' our friends, an' I think we'd better be movin' up stream on the lookout fer signs."

"Yes, friends, let us be moving, for I am anxious to see Arthur and his friend, for I do believe that they have found the cave and perhaps are seeking to effect Maud's release without our help, so therefore let us hurry away from this."

"Yer needn't be uneasy, my young friend, about ther gettin' yer sweetheart outen ther robbers' han's. It'll take mor'n them and all on us ter du it, yer may bet."

Mounting their horses, they continued their slow march upstream, carefully examining the ground for any indication of a cave or signs of their friends or the robbers.

Every boulder or clump of trees or shrubbery was carefully examined by the three friends, and this they continued for several miles.

The scout being in the advance in a narrow path winding around a boulder, espied a little clearing

nearly a hundred feet from the river, he made for this, and coming up to the edge of the clearing he saw the charred remains of a fire. Alighting from his horse, he examined the ground around the fire. Here the scouting propensities of the scout came into play. After looking long and carefully at the footprints in the soft earth around the fire, he said:

"Only one individual has been here, an' he must be a dapper chap at thet, fer he wore a nice pair of high-heeled boots an' hed a small foot ter boot. I'd gamble thet it were thet air Larkin as made this ere fire tu dry himself, after he thought he were out of danger from pursuit."

"It must have been him that has been here," said Robert, "and these signs show us that we are on the right trail to the cave."

"Now if I ken trail this ere footprint it will lead us tu the retreat of ther band, fer I think thet he has made fer the rendezvous of the robbers. Hugh, yer ken lead my hoss alongside of yourn, while I follow this trail on foot."

The scout now followed the footprints, sometimes walking at a rapid pace, at other times throwing himself on all fours on the ground where the trail became extinct, examining every spray of bent grass or broken twig until he once more found the trail.

This he kept up for nearly an hour, when he came in full view of two horses tied to a sapling in a clump of shrubbery.

The scout gave a chuckle of delight when he discovered the horses, and going up to them he discovered

them to be the horses ridden the day previous by Arthur and the detective.

Robert and Hugh coming up a glad shout broke from their lips on their recognizing the horses of their friends.

The scout spoke up and said:

"This ere find shows us that our friends are somewhere around here, but whether they are prisoners or free is yet tu be explained; but near here they are, fer sartin shure, an' before long we'll find out what has become of them."

Yes, they are near here," said Robert, "without doubt, and so are the robbers, or else they would not have tied their horses here and gone off on foot."

"Wall, we must do ther same thing an' be quick about it tu, fer we don't know how near we may be tu ther robbers or our friends."

Suiting the action to the word, they dismounted and began by hitching their horses near those of their friends. They had just completed the task when the detective Crawford, followed by Arthur Blackwell, broke through the chaparral, without the least warning of their proximity.

The scout and his friends were surprised and elated at their sudden appearance amongst them. A general handshaking occurred between the friends.

After the greetings were over, Robert asked what had been their success, and Arthur said:

"Friends, congratulate us; we have discovered the robbers' retreat."

"It is even so," said the detective, "and only needs

your combined assistance and that of some others that I have at my command to capture the whole lot of them.

“Arthur can tell you of our adventures since we left you, following up the robbers on the night of the train disaster up to the present time, and in return, you, Mr. Folsom, can acquaint us of your experience at the wreck after our departure up to this moment.”

CHAPTER XXXV

THE DETECTIVE UNFOLDS HIS PLANS

Arthur recounted to his friends of the chase of the robbers on the prairie, on the night of the wrecked train, of their giving up the pursuit and crossing the Ford on the instigation of the detective, painting in glowing colors his secret warnings, of their long wait on the other side of the river for the return of the robbers; of their entering the robbers' encampment, and their being taken by the robbers for two Yankees, and of the invitation to join the band at breakfast, and being shown by the chief, Black Jack, their way back to Baxter, and, last of all, their return to the place the robbers disappeared; their long vigil of waiting before they discovered the retreat of the robbers, of which the reader was made acquainted in a preceding chapter.

In return Robert gave a detailed account of their finding Colonel Blackstone in the wreck and his rescue and of his safe lodgment at Baxter and of the colonel's anxiety about the safety of Maud and Arthur, the appointment not being kept by Arthur and the detective; of their finding a clew to Larkin's escape from the river, and of his safe return to the robbers.

After explanations were over Robert wanted them to effect an entrance to the robbers' retreat in order

to rescue Maud, and it was some time before he could be prevailed upon to desist from such an undertaking as he proposed for the present.

The detective spoke of the impossibility of such an undertaking, but if they would listen to him, he would explain a plan by which the robbers would be captured and Maud rescued. The detective thus explained:

"Some of you are not aware of my real business in this neighborhood, therefore I will enlighten you.

"Before my chief set me to work on this case of the capture of Miss Blackstone, I was sent out here in the interest of the U. S. Government to ferret out and bring to punishment a daring band of counterfeiters and illicit distillers, who, the Government had advised, were in this neighborhood.

"I have been at work on this case now for nearly six months, and at the time Mr. Blackstone's case was placed in my hands I had gained certain knowledge of such a band. In following up the last case I found that they were both connected together, and my knowledge of the first made my work the more easy.

"To find the rendezvous of this gang of law-breakers was my greatest trouble, and to this end in view I devoted myself entirely, with what success you all know.

"Now, as to my method of capturing them, you will learn shortly.

"When Mr. Blackwell came out here to join me, he brought with him certain papers from my chief, which will be of valuable service to us in the rescue of Miss

THE DETECTIVE UNFOLDS HIS PLANS 187

Blackstone and the apprehension of the whole band of daring robbers.

"Among other papers enclosed to me, I found an order to me individually from General Sherman, as also one directed to the commandant at Fort Seward.

"The paper directed to me from the general contained the information that the one directed to the commandant, Major Parsons, was to place at my disposal all the available force at the Fort, whenever called upon to do so, and to follow my instructions to the letter.

"Now, friends, you see that we can have all the help we shall need only for the asking, and if we do not succeed in scooping in all the robbers it will be our fault.

"If our friend the scout will accompany me to the Fort we will lay our plans for the capture of the robbers. The rest can take up the march back to Baxter, and when we have made all necessary arrangements with the commandant we will return and acquaint you of the time and meet the soldiers at some point agreed upon between us."

The scout signified his readiness to accompany the detective to the Fort.

The rest of the friends thought it the best plan to let these two experienced men go alone together, that they might talk over their plans on the way.

The detective had another motive in thus taking the scout with him. He thought that if he left him with the rest that he might become jealous and prevail on them to affect a rescue without his help, and

thus spoil all his plans for capturing this band of whom he had spent days and nights of weary hunt to find and bring to justice.

He did not intend to let any stray obstacle impede his path and place a stumbling block in his way, when so near the accomplishment of his arduous task.

After the friends had ridden together for nearly a mile the detective and the scout separated from them on their way to the Fort.

Hugh sat his horse and looked long and wistful after the scout and the detective, hoping that his friend the scout would call him to his side, as he did not wish to be separated from him for the few hours intervening before he would again be with him.

At last, when they were nearly out of view, he dug the spurs deep into the sides of his horse, and soon came up to the rest of his party, who were waiting for him to come, not wishing to leave him by himself or out of their sight.

When he came up he said:

"Bejabbers, it's meself that's dead intirely; me friend has gone an' left me, an' he may be kilt an' murdered an' Hugh Muldoon not near to help him. Indade, Oi am the unlucky boh! ov a boy, Oi am."

An hour afterwards Arthur and Robert were both at the bedside of Colonel Blackstone, while Hugh was drowning his sorrow in the Golden Lion over a flowing bowl, soon followed by several others.

At about the same time the detective and the scout stood in the presence of Major Parsons, the commandant of Fort Seward.

CHAPTER XXXVI

MAJOR PARSONS COMMANDANT OF FORT SEWARD

Fort Seward was inclosed by a high palisade of logs placed closely together and placed three feet in the ground and firmly bound together by stringers of the same material spiked on either side. Drop-roof sheds were built nearly around the inside of this inclosure and against the stockade, which served as quarters for the privates and the stock belonging to the Fort. In these the cooking was done for the whole command, and storage rooms were in plenty.

Every forty feet apart on top of the palisade were placed sentry boxes all around the vast inclosure, which took in eight acres.

To an observer it could be seen that the outside surface of the logs showed the scars of many an attack on this stronghold, from the fierce onslaughts of the Indians, who tried, in times past, to drive them off of their hunting grounds.

The Indians, discouraged at their futile attempts to drive the Government interlopers off, made themselves resigned to the inevitable, and at the time here narrated were at peace with the servants of the Government, and exchanged pleasantries with them whenever they met each other, which occurred quite often owing to the reports of Indian

depredations coming to the ear of the Government officials.

In the center of this inclosure was a large block-house, which was used as the officers' headquarters. The building was made of roughly hewed logs, and was a one-story structure, a flat, squatty affair, covering considerable ground. On the center of the roof was a tall tower, which was built for a place of lookout. Here a sentinel was placed during day and night, and only relieved when another took his place at the expiration of certain hours.

A cord attached to a bell in the officers' quarters acquainted the commandant of an approach of any one or any suspicious roving bands on the prairie in their neighborhood. An officer was dispatched by the commandant to the place of lookout when he heard the tinkle of the bell, to go and make an observation and report.

When the detective and the scout were seen by the lookout on their approach to the Fort, the commandant knew of their appearance, and by the aid of a powerful field glass he recognized the scout Squint-Eyed Bob as one of his visitors. The other he knew was a stranger in the vicinity, and he was puzzled as to their errand.

He was well aware that it was business of importance that was bringing them to his station, for he well knew that the scout never made him a visit unless his business was one of importance, therefore he was bothered as to the visit of the scout and his friend.

He issued orders to Lieutenant Clayton to have fifty

of the best of his command ready for the saddle at the word of command.

The soldiers under the command of the lieutenant were ready for an instant march, leaning against the side of their horses, while the quartermaster, assisted by his orderly, was dealing out a three-days' ration. He had just served the last one, when the scout and the detective were admitted into the stockade.

An orderly in waiting, being asked if the commandant, Major Parsons, was in his quarters, replied:

"Yes, sir! and is waiting your presence in the council room."

"Awaiting our presence! why how does he know of our coming, or of our object," said the detective.

"Oh, as to knowing of your coming we discerned our friend, Squint-Eyed Bob, there, a half-hour ago on the prairie, from the lookout," pointing toward that place with his index finger.

"Ah! I forgot that, by the aid of a glass, you could make out objects at a distance," remarked the detective.

"Just so, and of course you must have important business, and the Major is awaiting your pleasure, gentlemen."

The orderly led them into the presence of Major Parsons, who received the scout by a hearty handshake.

The scout introduced the detective to the major, which we give in his own peculiar style:

"Majer, this yere am my friend, there detective, an' he's got sum business with yer, Majer, what is

important. Major Parsons this are Mister Crawfish.

The major and the detective acknowledged the introduction by a shake of the hand, both smiling at the awkward way of introduction.

"Be seated, gentlemen," assigning them seats near him at a table.

"Yes, Major, I have important business with you; but before I unfold it to you I wish you to look over this letter entrusted to me by your superior officer," handing the major the letter from General Sherman, directed to the major.

The major read its contents carefully, and then fell into a silent study. He was thus engaged for several minutes; at last he spoke to the detective.

"So you are Mr. Crawford, and in the government employ. You belong to the great detective bureau of Allan Pinkerton, of Chicago, as mentioned in this letter."

"I am the person mentioned in the letter to you."

"I declare I would not take you for such a person, by your dress and appearance at this moment."

The three broke into a hearty laugh at the major's sally.

"I am aware that my dress just now belies the report; but you are aware that us detectives are compelled to dress in all kinds of disguises and use all kinds of subterfuges to further our ends."

"Right you are, Mr. Crawford, I only intended a joke when I mentioned your present disguise."

"Yes, to be sure, I only took your remark as such."

"But in regard to your business here, I suppose you need my help and are impatient at the delay. State your case and we will see what can be done for you."

The detective told all to the commandant, and when he had finished, Major Parsons arose and walked the room in an excited manner. He continued to walk backward and forward for some time and when his wrath had partially subsided, he stopped in front of the detective and said.

" 'Tis an everlasting disgrace, sir! to think that a large band of counterfeiters, illicit distillers, train wreckers, murderers, and the Lord only knows what more, have made their rendezvous right under my very nose, for several years past and I not know of their existence. 'Tis, I repeat, an everlasting disgrace."

"Major Parsons, I do not look at this affair as you do. You must remember that the very men you supposed as friends, are connected with this band, and they, with their winning smiles, have succeeded in pulling the wool over your eyes, while they carried on their nefarious work."

"I cannot believe this of the men I supposed as my friends; however this will not prevent me from my duty to my superior officer or from doing my duty as a soldier."

"Bravely spoken, Major, and I will do all in my power to lighten the burden that will surely be on you when this gets to Washington."

"My whole garrison is at your command, Mr. Crawford, as well as myself, and I will go with you in per-

son so that I may see with my own eyes the truth of this serious affair.

"I hope you may be mistaken, for my sake, but I would like to see any unlawful band broken up even at the expense of my own life.

"If such a lawless band are in my supervision it will be as much as my straps are worth when it gets to General Sherman, but my ignorance of their existence will be my excuse. Therefore whatever comes out of it, I will be found at my post doing my duty, and if it be the will of God that my white hairs be brought down to the grave in sorrow and disgrace, then I must submit to the inevitable."

"I am certain Major you will come out of this affair unscathed."

"Grant the Lord, that I may, for I could never lift up my head again without thinking that my fellow men looked at me in derision."

"My knowledge of this affair will be of great value to you, as will also that of our friend the scout, whom every one calls their friend, and whose powerful lever brought to bear on any charge made against you, cannot fail to have the desired effect."

"Yer can count on me every time, Major, an' ef I have tu turn over the hul west an' wade knee deep in gore, yer shall be saved any misfortun in this yer affair. I've known yer nigh unto ten year, an' I hev never seen narry thing but kindness in yer, an' yer jes' gamble thet them big guns et Washington an't got nothin' tu du with yer, while Squint-Eyed Bob air around."

"Thanks, my friend for the good opinion you have of me, and I hope you will never be called upon to testify in my favor, if so, I will remember you.

"Now, Mr. Crawford have you formed any plans for the apprehension of these ruffians yet?"

"I have, and will give them to you so that you can act upon them.

"My friend, the scout, and myself, while on the way here, formed our plan of action.

"With your help and co-operation we will guard and attack the robbers' stronghold to-morrow morning at sunrise."

"You think this the best time to make the capture?"

"After a careful study and debate we think so."

"How many men will you require?"

"We want all the available force you can spare, as I want to make a complete capture of the whole band."

"I can give you two hundred of the boys. This will leave fifty to guard the fort."

"Ah! this complement of men is more than sufficient. However I can make use of them by placing them as sentries for half a mile around their retreat, also some across the river opposite, while ten more will be placed on either side of the ford and by this means draw a net-work around them that few will escape from the meshes."

"I declare, Mr. Crawford, you are a born soldier, you should have taken to the army instead of the profession you now follow. You have seen what I should have perhaps overlooked."

"Not so, Major, I and my friend have had time for

study, while you have only heard of the facts and have had barely time to give them a thought."

"Then, Mr. Crawford, I place myself and my men at your command."

"When will you start out for the robbers' rendezvous?"

"We will have to leave here by midnight, so as to have time to place our men in position before the attack."

"Then I shall give my orders immediately to that effect, so that everything will be in readiness, when the hour of departure arrives."

The major, going to a cord hanging from the ceiling near the side of the room, gave a vigorous pull.

The tinkle of a bell was heard and before the sound died away, an orderly made his appearance, saluting the major in military style.

"Orderly, send Captain Andrews to me immediately."

The orderly, again saluted and withdrew.

"Gentlemen, you must consider yourselves my guests until this affair is over."

"Thanks, Major," replied the detective, "we accept your kind invitation, and would ask a favor of you."

"A thousand if you wish, Mr. Crawford."

"We have friends of whose existence we told you who we would wish to be with us in this raid, as you know they are directly interested in the fair captive."

"Ah, I had forgotten them. What enormous brains you detectives have for committing everything

to memory. You do not forget the least thing in your chain of evidence."

"It is our profession that keeps us busy thinking, Major."

"No doubt. What is your pleasure in regard to your friends?"

"I wish you would detail two of your men to carry a message from me to my friends."

"Your wish shall be gratified."

Captain Andrews here made his appearance. After saluting his superior, he was introduced to the detective; the scout he was well acquainted with."

"Captain Andrews, have companies I and G filled to their full complement out of Company D. You are to take command of your own company, while young Lieutenant Clayton can command Company G. I will give you his promotion to hand him, when you give him the order. I have considered his claim to promotion since the death of Captain Rogers. See that Captain Clayton and yourself have your men well armed and provisioned with one week's rations. Send me two of your trustiest men immediately. Now depart and see that my instructions are carried out without delay."

With a wave of the hand the major dismissed the captain.

After the captain had departed, he again rang the bell, and the orderly again appearing, he said:

"Send refreshments here immediately."

"Now, Mr. Crawford, you can prepare your dispatch, as my men will be here soon."

The dispatch was prepared and two soldiers made their appearance.

"You are both to take this dispatch to the person whose address is on the outside," said the major, "and you are not to leave each other alone for one instant; you are to accompany some friends back here, and be sure you reach here before midnight.

"Away now."

While they were enjoying the refreshments the major had ordered, we will leave them and return to the Planter's Hotel at Baxter Springs and see how it is faring with Colonel Blackstone.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE INVALID HEARS IMPORTANT NEWS

On the arrival of Robert Folsom, Arthur Blackwell and Hugh Muldoon in Baxter Springs, after, leaving their friends the detective and scout on their way to Fort Seward, Robert and Arthur repaired to the apartments occupied by Colonel Blackstone in the Planter's Hotel, while Hugh went direct to the Golden Lion to quench his long thirst in the flowing bowl.

They were ushered into the colonel's room by the servant whom Robert had employed to take care of the colonel.

They found Colonel Blackstone reclining in an easy chair by the window overlooking the main street; he had noticed the arrival of the young men and was anxiously awaiting their appearance.

Arthur stepped hastily forward and took the colonel's hand and held it in a long and tender clasp.

Arthur broke the long silence:

"Colonel, I am pained to see you thus. You should not have endangered your life and health by coming here."

"My friend I could bear the silence no longer, and when I had regained my health I followed, hoping that I would be of some assistance in regaining my

daughter; if only even to be near where I could hear from those in quest of her."

The colonel motioned Robert to his side, he had been standing in the background.

"Come, come, Mr. Folsom, my young friend, and let me welcome you back."

Robert stepped forward and shook hands with the colonel, saying:

"Colonel, I am pleased to see you looking so much better than when I left you. I hope that your confinement will be of short duration."

"I am much easier to-day, thanks to your kind attention. You could not have done more for me than a son would for a father."

"Do not flatter me, Colonel, I have only done for you what I should have done for another in like circumstance."

Then Arthur hastily said:

"Colonel Blackstone, you are under deeper obligations to our friend Folsom than you are aware of, he and his friends have been tireless in their efforts to rescue your daughter Maud; of this I shall speak more fully later."

"Ah! strange, strange, I was not aware that Mr. Folsom was connected with this matter of my daughter's detention. But we will speak of this by and by. Do you bring me good news Arthur? I can see by your countenance that you have some good news to tell me. Do not keep me in suspense longer, my boy."

"I have good news for you, my friend, and I am

certain that ere another day rolls away, that you shall clasp your daughter to your breast."

"Grant God, that your words shall come true. Your words give me courage and raise my drooping spirits."

"Mr. Folsom has given me a partial account of facts from the time of your meeting till the time when you and the detective started in pursuit of the robbers. I wish, Arthur, you would give me your experience in brief that I may be able to connect incidents.

"I am also anxious to learn if you succeeded in finding the robbers' retreat."

Arthur here gave Colonel Blackstone an account of all that happened since the night of the wreck.

After he had finished, the colonel sat in deep thought for a long time. At length he said:

"So we can lay all this trouble to that scoundrel Larkin; he shall pay dearly for this."

"Yes, you have him to thank for all your troubles in this affair."

"Then we shall hear from the detective and the scout in a short time? Would that I were so that I could go with you to the rescue."

"It is best as it is, there will be enough without your help, if the commandant will lend us his assistance."

"He must, he shall, unless his heart is hard as stone, when he learns that a lady is captive among those brigands."

"Well in a few hours at least we shall know what we are to expect from the major at Fort Seward,

who, from what the scout tells us, is a gentleman and a brave soldier at that.

"Now, Colonel, if you will excuse us for a short time, we will make our departure, as we have to make a few preparations for the expedition to-night, and I have no doubt but that Robert is anxious about his friend whom we left at the Golden Lion. For there is no knowing what danger Hugh might do to our plans in his cups, so it is better we look after him."

"Yes, you are right, for when whisky is in, the tongue is loosened and he might spoil all your plans."

"I do not think that Hugh would wittingly give us away even in his cups," said Robert, "but it is best to be sure."

"During all the time I have been in the company of Hugh and the scout, I have found him true to our interest; but as you both say, it is best to be on the guard at this particular time."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

HUGH MULDOON AS A GAMBLER

Arthur and Robert withdrew to their rooms in the hotel to make their toilets. Arthur, not wishing to be recognized in the Golden Lion as the Yankee so as to avoid the attention of Jim Blakely whom he and the detective had promised to give an entertainment at his place in the evening, knowing that it would now be impossible to do so, on account of the expected raid on the robbers, and having no further use for his disguise or for further wearing it, as he had accomplished what he had come to do with its means.

When he made his appearance in the hotel office Robert was awaiting him and they both sauntered out. They went up the street toward the Golden Lion.

On entering the Golden Lion they found Hugh busily engaged at one of the tables where roulette was in full force.

They noticed that Hugh was flushed with the liquor he had been imbibing and Robert and Arthur could see that the gambler was taking advantage of Hugh's state and ignorance of the game, for Hugh didn't know whether he was winner or not and depended on the honesty of the gambler, who to draw Hugh on, gave him chips from time to time.

Hugh's tongue was running incessantly, and a crowd was around the table poking fun at him.

Robert elbowed his way into the crowd to the side of Hugh and touched him on the shoulder.

Hugh looked up to see who had dared to touch him.

"Arrah, it is yer self, Misther Robert, faix I'd thought yer at the hotel, this blissed minit."

"Come, Hugh, we will have to go away pretty soon."

"Hould on a bit, 'till I'd be afther tryin' me luck once more, me boy."

Hugh placed all his chips, amounting to twenty, each representing a dollar, on the turn.

The gambler started the marble, it came to Hugh's number but the gambler reached over to draw in Hugh's chips instead of thribling them as he should have done.

"Hold up there!" said Robert, "my friend won and he is entitled to forty chips more by right of the game."

The gambler counted out the sixty additional chips, casting, as he did so, dark looks on Robert.

"Shure I'm afther thinkin' that the spalpeen has been chatin' me all the time Misther Robert, but I'll not give him another chance."

And Hugh gathered up his chips and walked up to the cashier and had them cashed and found himself winner fifteen dollars, which elated him.

"Come, now, Misther Robert, an' have a drink wid me, be gorry, we'll spend the dirty money or it'll burn me fingers if I be afther kapin' it wid me."

Arthur now stepped forward and said, "Keep your money, Hugh, and drink on me."

Hugh looked at Arthur in amaze and surprise. He had never seen him in his present dress and took him for one of the habitués of the Golden Lion.

"Shure an' I don't know who yez are, I've never had the honor ov yer acquaintance before, at all, at all."

Robert, laughing, stepped back from Hugh and Arthur.

Hugh followed him up and asked him, "Who is he anyhow?"

"Oh, a friend of ours," said Robert. Arthur came up to them again with a roguish twinkle in his eye and said:

"Come and have a drink with me!"

"Shure an' I won't dhrink wid a stranger anyhow, an' I've joined the temperance band," said Hugh, with a sort of I-wish-I-hadn't-done-it expression on his face. Do yez mane to insult an honest man?" he cried in tones of thunder, as visions of a hot Tom-and-Jerry floated before his eyes. "Shure, it's mane to be afther tim'tin' a timperance man, so it is."

"Why, Hugh, I meant no insult. When did you quit drinking—since yesterday?"

"Shure, ye're an honest mon, thet's phat ye are," said Hugh, touched at Arthur's kindness.

"Och, shure, Oi was afther bein' in Father Murphy's parsonage to-day to be afther givin' him the money to say a mass for me poor father's soul wid, Lord rest his soul, when Father Murphy sez to me:

'Hugh,' sez he. 'Phat,' sez Oi. 'Will yez do me a favor?' sez he. 'Oi will: phat is it?' sez Oi, thinking he wanted me to sign me name to the paper for a subscription to the new church.

"'Faith, Oi want yez to jine me timperance club, sez he.' Shure, Oi waz thunderstruck fur a minit, but thin Father Murphy hez bin a frind ov moine fur years, fur didn't he baptize me whin I waz a broth of a boy in the auld country whin me mother bore me in her arms to the church tin miles to his worship, an' Oi had to jine.

"Badad, Oi'll regrit it to me doyin' day, so Oi will!

"But did yez iver hear thet no docthor iver takes his own medicine? Shure, Oi don't want to break me word, but ef me docther won't take the medicine he gev me, faith, there's no harum in me violatin' his directions.

"Arrah, thin, Oi wouldn't be afther hurtin' yer koind feelin's for tin hundred Father Murphy's, or all ov the timperance clubs in the west.

"We'll take jist wan dhrop of the swate crature, an' thet'll be the ind!" with a shy wink at Robert, Hugh stepped forward to the bar.

Hugh called for his favorite beverage and quaffed it down with a gulp, after which he insisted on his treating which he was allowed to do.

While the bartender was preparing the second round Hugh whispered to Robert as to who his friend was, and when told, he was thunderstruck; he looked at Arthur for a few minutes and then taking him by the hand, said:

"Shure, frind Arthur, Oi must be out ov me moind intoirely, indade Oi must, to think, Oi waz afther takin' yez fer wan of the dhirty gamblers is too much for Hugh Muldoon to bear, indade it is. I'll jine the Injins afther this, so Oi will.

After paying their score, they left the Golden Lion and for an hour they walked about the town in order to give Hugh a chance to brace up a little, who was fast succumbing to King Alcohol.

On reaching the Planter's Hotel, the clerk handed a note to Arthur from Colonel Blackstone, bidding him and his friends to come direct to his room on their arrival.

Arthur called Robert and Hugh to his side and read the note to them.

They all three went direct to Colonel Blackstone's room where they found the colonel in earnest conversation with the two soldiers who had been dispatched from Fort Seward by the commandant, Major Parsons, with the dispatch written by the detective to Arthur.

The soldiers arose on their appearance and one of them on being assured that Arthur was the one they were seeking, handed him the dispatch.

The soldiers said they would await their pleasure in the hotel office and left the room.

When the soldiers left the apartment Arthur broke the seal and read the dispatch to his friends.

It contents read:

"When you receive this, do not delay a moment but come direct to the fort. Everything is arranged for an attack on the stronghold of the robbers. We leave

here at midnight and should some unforeseen circumstance prevent your getting this dispatch, after our departure hence, you can repair with your friends to the robbers' retreat. You are to accompany the soldiers back here."

When Arthur had finished the reading of the dispatch a glad light dawned on the countenance of Colonel Blackstone, and he said:

"My hour of patient waiting is near at an end, soon shall I see my darling child. Oh! what joy. Make all haste my friends and be off, and may a father's blessing follow you all, and bring you back again, and with you my daughter."

"We leave you now, Colonel, and hope, on our return, to place in your arms your daughter," said Arthur.

"Go, my brave boys, and may the Lord protect you all from harm."

Arthur, Robert and Hugh, after bidding the colonel good-bye, went to the office. Arthur stepped up to the soldiers who had delivered him the dispatch and said:

"You and your comrade had better mount and go to the outskirts of the town and there await us. We will not keep you waiting long. We do this to avoid arousing the suspicions of the people here by seeing us in your company."

The soldiers mounted their horses and moved off, while Hugh went to the stable to order their horses to be brought to them.

Shortly after they were on their way to meet the soldiers.

Night was closing in around the fort when the three friends were ushered into the presence of Major Parsons, the commandant of Fort Seward, where they met the detective and the scout making themselves at home.

They were introduced to the commandant.

Everything was life and bustle in the inclosure, getting everything in readiness for their march to the robbers' stronghold.

CHAPTER XXXIX

LARKIN AND THE MINISTER

We will now carry the reader back to the robbers' cave, and see what transpired after the arrival of the minister, whom Larkin had sent for to consummate the marriage between himself and Maud, and who had just but arrived after the chief and Larkin returned to the main entrance hall, after Black Jack had shown and explained to Richard and his daughter the mysteries of the cavern.

Black Jack and Richard Larkin had just entered the main entrance chamber of the cave from out the secret passage, when Richard's eye encountered his former college chum.

They both glared at each other, until Black Jack, with a roar of laughter, that echoed like rolling thunder through the cavern, broke the spell.

"I declare, a body would think you two were going to eat each other by the looks of things."

"My friend, Charlie, let me welcome you to the retreat, and for the sake of old times, let us be friends."

"With all my heart, Richard; but you take unfair advantage of me in compelling me to be a party to this unholy business of yours."

"Bah! talk that way to strangers who do not know you; but not to me."

"I never expected this at your hands, Richard."

"No doubt, you'd never have heard from me if I didn't have business with you."

"If you did not have respect for me, you should have had for the cloth I wear."

"Nonsense, my boy, you must have changed your coat since you came west. Now in the past you thought no more of——"

"Enough! say no more Richard. Do not recall the past. I would I were buried with it before I was called upon in this affair of yours."

"Oh! you needn't have any compunctions about this affair of mine unless you have changed since I last asked your advice on——"

"Why not let that subject drop, haven't I told you I wished to forget the past and live only in the present, without the fear of that skeleton forever before my eyes and memory."

"I do not care to open up old wounds afresh, myself, Charlie, I only thought you had forgotten something and I only wanted to tickle up your memory."

"Then let the past alone, suffice it, that I am here to do your bidding, whether willing or not. After which you must pledge me you will never reveal to living soul the sword you now hold over my head."

"That's the ticket, Charlie. Now you talk as of old. I pledge you my honor after you do this job you will never hear from me again."

"Is the bride a willing or unwilling one, Richard?"

"She will be an unwilling bride, but that will make no difference, all you will have to do will be to perform

the ceremony whether you receive her answer or not. After which make out a marriage certificate duly signed and witnessed and your reward will be my silence in the future and a thousand-dollar bill."

"Will nothing change your mind, Richard Larkin? You know I am well acquainted with the parents of the bride, although she is an entire stranger to me, and I feel rather shaky in the matter."

"You needn't feel scary, my boy. I think after she finds that she is really my wife, that she will submit with good grace. There is no doubt but that she thinks she hates me now, but you know girls have all sorts of whims and it'll be singular if she be an exception."

"Lord grant it may be as you say, if it should turn out different I should loathe myself ever after, for the cowardly part I am taking in this affair."

Now let us adjourn to the audience room; where we can talk more freely, and, as you must be tired and thirsty after your long jaunt, I will have some refreshments served."

Richard and the minister took seats around a table in the audience room which belonged to the chief, Black Jack, and a person was always free from intrusion here save from the chief or his daughter and Aunt Hagar.

This room was assigned to Richard during his stay with the band, and he was free to go and come as he chose.

Larkin rang a small bell, and shortly afterward Aunt Hagar made her appearance.

"Hagar, bring us the best eatables you can prepare in the shortest possible time; also a bottle of the best wine you have."

"Yes, massa."

Hagar was about to leave the room, when Richard said.

"Stay! How is the fair captive, Maud?"

"De captive am doin' well, Major. It'd make yo eyes swim tu see her. She am lookin' like de angel dat she am."

"You can tell her that the minister has arrived, and that she can make ready to see him."

"Yes, massa."

Hagar left the apartment and hurried off to fill the order given her by Larkin, saying to herself, and often repeating it aloud.

"De minister am come, an' what am de little angel gyne tu do any mo."

She kept on repeating this until near the kitchen we mentioned in a former chapter when she was startled by the appearance of Julia, who caught her by the wrist and said:

"Who did you say just now had come?"

"Laws, Missies Julia, yo did frighten dis chile."

"Never mind; who did you say had come?"

"I was jest spoken to myself, dat de minister, dat am gyne tu jine de little angel captive to de bad man, Major Larkin, am come."

"Oh, that's the rumpus, is it? Where is the captive you speak of, confined, Hagar?"

"In de Blue Room, Missus Julia."

"Well, I must see this prisoner I hear so much about."

"You will sabe de little angel, my missus, now won't you, an' de good Lor' will bless yo to de las' day ob life."

"Be off about your business, Hagar. What right have I to interfere in a business that does not concern me in any way?"

But she could not help thinking all the time that it did concern her in some way or other.

She had fallen deeply in love with Richard on their first meeting of the evening before, and she could not help but think that this marriage in some way, if allowed to come off, would blight her life forever.

"I will go and see this captive and hear her story and then perhaps I may save her."

Aunt Hagar, on returning to Larkin and the minister with the wine, found them in an animated conversation.

Busying herself about the table she could now and then catch a word here and there of the conversation, but it was so disconnected that she could not connect it.

She could only make out a few sentences:

"Why do you wish me to have a talk with the captive?"

"Oh, I thought that by doing so you might bring her over to our way of thinking."

"Ah! I see, you want me to convince her that a marriage with you would be best, owing to circumstances."

"Just so."

"Well, I will try."

"When do you intend to have the marriage take place?"

"Let me see," drawing out his watch, "it is now eight o'clock. I think that at twelve to-night everything can be prepared."

"I must see Black Jack and have him prevail on his daughter to assist us with the ceremony by acting as a bridesmaid. It will seem more real to Maud."

"A good plan, indeed!"

"Now that you have had your inner man satisfied you had better visit the captive and I will go in search of the chief," said Larkin.

"I am ready."

"Hagar, show Mr. Mordaunt to the captive's apartment, but I forgot. You have not appraised her of his coming. Go at once and do so, then return immediately."

Hagar went to Maud's room and told her all that she had learned from the conversation of Larkin and the minister, and told her of the minister's visit to her. Then she hurried off, and shortly came back accompanied by the minister, whom Maud received like a princess, hoping that she might convince him of his wrong doing.

CHAPTER XL

THE MINISTER'S VISIT TO MAUD

The Rev. Mr. Mordaunt was not thoroughly bad at heart. It was his fear and dread of Richard Larkin that made him a willing tool in his hands, and his fear of his past life being made public to the world that made him enter into the plans of Larkin.

When he entered the apartment and saw so much loveliness before him his heart troubled him for the cowardly part he was playing in the affair.

Maud motioned him to a seat near her, and said:

"So, Mr. Mordaunt, you are the minister who is employed to assist in this sacrilegious affair, and who would rob a young girl of that she loves dearest on earth, her freedom, against her wishes and those of her parents?"

"Believe me, my dear child, if I am a party to this unholy affair, it is against my will, and my manhood rebels against it."

"If, as you say, your manhood rebels, why are you here? and why do you submit to be a tool to the wishes of this bad man?"

"I cannot help myself. I am in Richard Larkin's power, and on this account must do his bidding."

"Are you not aware, Mr. Mordaunt, that by being a party to this marriage you are committing an offense,

amenable to the laws of the land, and as sure as there is a God above us, I will bring you all to justice if this marriage takes place?"

"I am well aware of my position, Miss Blackstone, but between them both I have no choice in the matter."

"Oh! I never would have believed that a minister of the gospel could be prevailed upon to act in this unholy affair, if I did not see it with my own eyes."

"Do not judge me so harshly, or those of my profession. In my college life I was guilty of an offense which will do no good to repeat here to you; but an offense that I have been ever since heartily sorry for, which left me in the power of Richard Larkin. If this was brought to light I would be shunned by my fellowmen. Larkin, knowing this, holds this brand over my head ready to ignite it if I fail in his scheme."

"Will nothing save you from his wrath if you refuse to perform this ceremony, Mr. Mordaunt?"

"No, nothing, my child! A word dropped from him would ruin me. I was so happy and contented in my new home in the west, where I am looked up to as a moral man, with my family around me, thinking that the past was buried forever, when one sad day, a letter arrived from Richard Larkin, commanding me to come here or take the consequences. So, Miss Blackstone, you see my position. A dear wife and child at home thinking me the soul of honor and my parishioners looking up to me a model of all that is good."

"I am sorry for you and your wife and child, Mr. Mordaunt, but do you know that you are about to

consign me to a living death when you give assistance to the marriage?"

"I know it, my child, but my visit to you is to try and show you that it will be best to be legally married, rather than become his mistress, as he threatens."

"He dare not do that!"

"Yes, but he dare. He will dare anything to further his ends. You do not know Larkin as I do."

"Then, my God, what is to become of me?"

"Submit to his wishes and be his lawful wedded wife, Miss Blackstone, and thus avoid the shame and disgrace to yourself and parents."

"Oh! I can never, never be his wife."

"But it is far better to become his wife than worse. Of the two evils, choose the least and more honorable, my child, and save yourself and me from everlasting disgrace."

"Oh! you do not know what you would have me do, Mr. Mordaunt. You will drive me mad if you talk to me so. Go away and leave me in my misery!"

"I cannot till I have your answer, Miss Blackstone."

"Then, if you must have my answer, let it be this, now and forever, that if I have to kill myself with my own hands, I will never become the wife of this wretch who tried to rob me of my father, and now tries to rob a father of his child. Go to him and tell him this, Mr. Mordaunt!"

"Miss Blackstone, do not speak so. Surely you would not take your own life?"

"I will dare do anything rather than become the bride of that man."

"Then is this your final answer?"

"It is!"

"Can no persuasions of mine prevail on you?"

"No, you might talk to me from now until doom's day, and my answer would be the same."

"I admire your verdict, Miss Blackstone, but I cannot help but think you are acting foolishly in the matter."

"Perhaps I am. Leave me to myself now."

"I leave you, my child, but I pray the Lord you will think different when the time arrives."

"Oh, Mr. Mordaunt, when is it to take place?"

"At twelve to-night; my child."

"Then God help me."

"Amen!" said the minister, and he withdrew.

Maud buried her face in her hands and burst into tears.

The minister had barely turned the bend leading to the audience room ere Julia, the robber's daughter, entered the room of Maud and stood looking at her a few minutes, then said:

"Look up, my child, and tell me your sorrow. I have come to save you!"

CHAPTER XLI

THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY IN THE CAVE

"Look up, my child, and tell me your sorrow. I have come to save you."

Maud did look up when she heard these words spoken, and a vision of loveliness was before her eyes.

"Oh! God has heard my prayer, and he has sent you here to save me," said Maud, rising and throwing herself in the arms of the chief's daughter.

"Yes, child, I have come to save you."

"But how can you, a weak woman, and perhaps a prisoner like myself, save me?"

"Never mind how, but I will save you, if you enter into my plan."

"I will do anything that is right and just."

"I knew you would, my dear."

"But first tell me how you came here and at this time of all else."

"I live here, this is the only home I have. I am the chief's daughter, and the men call me their queen."

"When Maud heard this she withdrew herself from the embrace of Julia, and looked at her with a questioning look.

"Do not shun me for being the daughter of a robber chief, for I am as clear from sin as you are, my dear child, at this present time."

"Forgive me if I have pained you. I did not know but you were acting with the others, when you told me you belonged to them."

"I do forgive you, and I would have thought as you did, were I in your place."

"Be seated, my kind friend, while we talk together. Oh, how I prayed for some one of my own age that I might talk to and pour out my troubles to. Your coming has given me courage."

Maud and Julia seated themselves, and Julia commenced.

"Now, to begin, what is your name?"

"Maud Blackstone."

"And mine is Julia, for the present. Call me Julia and I will call you Maud, you see we are getting on amazingly."

"Now, Maud, I have been a listener to your conversation with the minister, and have heard all that was said between you. I was behind the drapery yonder," pointing to the curtain that covered the entrance and acted as a covering for a door. "On his departure I came in, so you see I am master of the situation; but there is some of your history that I do not understand yet, so I wish you would tell me all and keep nothing back from me, for believe me your friend."

"I do believe you, for how could one so beautiful as you are be otherwise than an angel."

"Flatterer, there are many, more beautiful than I am, and one I could name is not far off."

Maud told her history from a school girl up to the present time, keeping nothing from Julia.

"Now, Maud, in return I will return confidence with you. I have been sent here to you by my father and Richard Larkin to prepare you for the wedding and try to persuade you to become his wife and help you to dress for the wedding."

"But you need not try to gain my consent to become his wife, for my answer to your appeal will be the same as that to the minister, Mr. Mordaunt."

"Neither do I intend to, but to persuade you to enter a plan I have in view. Draw close and whisper, the walls may have ears."

After Julia had whispered to Maud, she looked up all aglow with flushed cheeks and beaming with smiles. Whatever Julia had said to her it gave her great joy.

"Then you consent?" said Julia.

"Yes, with pleasure."

"Then I will tell them you have consented to the marriage?"

"Yes, do so!"

"You will not falter or fail at the trial, Maud?"

"No, you will find me strong and resigned to my fate."

"Then I will tell them and come back presently. Till then, good-bye."

Julia stooped over Maud and kissed her and then left the room, and went to audience room, where her father, Richard and the minister were seated.

When she entered her father asked, "What luck, Julia."

"Oh, I have persuaded her, the little simpleton

consented, after I had nearly talked myself deaf and her nearly to death."

"I knew if anyone could bring her around it would be Julia. So fill up and drink to her success."

Richard Larkin jumped from his seat when he heard this news, and said, "Miss—, Julia, you have my heartfelt gratitude for the favor you have done me. Remember, please, that I am your life-long debtor."

"Not necessary, Mr. Larkin, to thank me for the part I took 'till after the ceremony, then good wishes and thanks will be in order; now they are out of place, but I freely forgive one who is soon to possess the loveliest little angel of a wife on earth."

Julia's voice, when she was speaking, trembled, and if they had noticed they might have heard a steely ring to it, but they were not thinking of any by-play from her, therefore did not notice the hard ring to her words.

"It is now getting late, father, and we will only have time to prepare for the wedding. It is now nearly eleven o'clock and it will take some time to prepare the bride and myself, therefore I will have to be off."

"I want to take her to my room to make her toilet, I suppose you have no objections, father?"

None in the least, child."

"The marriage is to take place in the council chamber, is it not?"

"Yes, child! I would like it to come off there, so that all the boys could witness it. It will be some-

thing novel to them. And Mr. Larkin cannot say but that he had plenty of witnesses and a good audience at his marriage."

"Then I will retire. Send Hagar to my room immediately, father."

"Yes, yes, child, now go."

Julia stooped over the back of her father's chair and kissed him, saying, "Good-bye, papa."

"Good-bye, Julia, but a body would think you were going away for a time, by your good-byes; but I suppose its the way of you women, and now that you are back I will have to get used to it."

Julia left her father and his friends and went to Maud, who was expecting her.

"Come, Maud, we have but very little time to spare, and if we succeed we must hurry."

"I am ready, Julia."

"Then follow me, be careful where you step, but stop, take my arm, there will be less danger."

They both entered the secret passage leading to Julia's room, and near the great council chamber of the band.

They found old Hagar there before them awaiting their appearance, and a few words to Hagar from Julia, put her at ease respecting Maud's appearance there.

Old Hagar now bustled about the room, going from one place to another, and Julia could see that Hagar was so nervous and over-joyed that she didn't know what she was about.

So going to her wardrobe she took therefrom two

suits of clothes in appearance exactly alike, and bade Hagar to help Maud make her toilet.

An hour passed by and Larkin and Black Jack had drank deep in their cups, while Mr. Mordaunt sat near reading a book and refusing the repeated proffered drinks and no doubt wishing himself far away from there.

They were in the act of draining their glasses, when Aunt Hagar came forward with a note to Richard Larkin.

He read the contents over carefully to himself and then read them aloud for the benefit of the rest.

"Mr. Larkin—Sir: We are ready in the Council Chamber awaiting your coming. Tell papa to have all the band assemble here as soon as he can and to come here himself as soon as possible as I wish him to stand up with you while I will act as bridesmaid for Maud. We are both dressed alike with the exception of a veil. You will know Maud by the long white veil I have placed about her. Do not delay longer than you can help, for I do not know how soon it will be before Maud will break completely down. She is now weakening, and I wish the ceremony well over.

"JULIA."

Fifteen minutes after the receipt of the letter, nearly all the band were assembled in the Council Chamber and all being there except a few left to guard the entrance to the cave.

Larkin took his place beside the one wearing the white veil and the minister, standing in front, commenced to read off the marriage ceremony.

So still were these rough bearded men as they stood in groups about the room, that you might have heard a pin drop on the stone floor of the cavern, and every word that was uttered by the minister was echoed back again as if in mockery of the ceremony being enacted there.

The minister had come to the passage in the ceremony where it read:

"Do you take this woman for your lawful wedded wife?" etc.

"I do," answered Larkin.

Then turning to the bride he asked the same question:

"Do you take this man for your lawful wedded husband?" etc.

A faint, "I do," hardly perceptible, came to the ears of all, and the minister continued: "Then I pronounce you man and wife, and what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

Richard Larkin, his eyes beaming with pleasure, clasped Maud to his breast and said:

"At last, darling, you are mine, mine forever."

"Yes," he continued, I have had a long, hard fight to conquer you, my love, but at last you consented."

"Maud, my love, you have really consented to be my wife?"

"Yes!"

"Happy man that I am. I will admit here now that I did scheme to possess you, but more to possess your millions."

The bride here stepped back and Richard, becom-

ing more intoxicated with joy and the liquor he had drank, continued:

"Oh, you need not shrink from my side, my dove, you are my lawful wedded wife now, as my comrades will bear me witness, and I am now master of your millions."

The bride now raised her hand to her head, and tearing away the veil, said:

"I guess not, Mr. Richard Larkin? I think I am mistress of my own millions?"

"By all the powers I am balked! I have married Julia instead of Maud."

A murmur of surprise from the audience, Maud dropped to the floor in a swoon, and was borne away by Aunt Hagar to Julia's room.

"Yes, Richard Larkin, you are foiled in your designs on that poor, defenceless girl."

"By the —, I will be avenged for this insult to me." Turning to Black Jack, he said, "and you, too, were a party to this scheme?"

"Indeed I am not, I am as much surprised as you are, but what has been done cannot be undone, so I suppose you must make the best of it. Upon my word, young man, I think, of the two, you have made the best bargain."

"I will not submit to be cheated thus."

"But you must," said Julia, "and as my husband you have no option in the matter. Is it not so, father?"

"You are Queen Julia and your word is law, and I pity the man that dares to disobey your orders."

"Then two of you seize this man and chain him in the strong-room until he comes to his senses."

Two men stepped forward and hurled Richard to the floor and were about to bind him, when one of the guard rushed in, out of breath, and said:

"Every outlet from here is surrounded by hundreds of soldiers, they are even now in the main entrance."

CHAPTER XLII

THE ROBBERS CAGED AND SURPRISED

"Betrayed and surprised!" said Black Jack, but not yet caught."

"Away, Miguel to the secret entrance and see if it is cut off; also make a reconnoitre of the force surrounding us."

"Aye, aye, my chief," as he darted away to do his bidding.

"Away, all of you, to the store room, and bring in the arms, and every man of you arm himself to the teeth and fight to the bitter end before you are taken."

"Let none of you shrink from doing your duty, and we will yet be the victors if a thousand were against us."

The men darted away to the store room and soon came back bearing chests filled with arms and ammunition. The room now strewn with fire arms of every conceivable make lay scattered on the velvet carpet.

The bandits now commenced to arm themselves each with what best suited his fancy.

Julia, who had shortly before left for her room, now came to her father's side dressed in man's attire.

In a belt around her waist was stuck a pair of beautiful ivory-handled revolvers, and a short sword of fine workmanship.

The men cast admiring glances at her and her father smiled on her, saying:

"Julia, my daughter, I wish you would stay in your room, out of danger. I could fight better knowing you were out of harm's way."

"No, father, my place is near you, and I will die at your side if needs be, for what is left to me if you are taken from me?"

"So be it, my daughter."

Miguel now returned, bearing the news that every place of retreat to the outer world was cut off and that hundreds of soldiers had surrounded them on all sides.

"Then we must cut our way out of this at the point of the sword or revolver," said the chief.

Firing now became general in the main passage, and the chief now knew that the guard were yet holding their own and keeping the soldiers at bay.

Forty bronzed and hardened brigands, now armed to the teeth, surrounded their chief awaiting his orders.

Larkin now came forward into the circle, followed by the trembling and frightened minister.

Larkin held a revolver in each hand, and as he came into the circle said:

"Chief, as I am now one of you, place me where I can do the most service."

"Aye, that I will, Larkin, you are worthy to be the husband of the Queen of the brigands, and I welcome you amongst us."

Larkin now stepped to Julia's side and said: "For-

give me if you can, my Queen, and allow me fight by your side, my wife."

A look of mingled surprise and love beamed from Julia's eyes, as she extended her hand to him.

The firing now approached nearer each moment, when the chief, in a voice of thunder, which reverberated through the vast room, said:

"Men, follow me!" and at their head he stepped into the secret passage leading into the main chamber.

When about half way he met the guards who were retreating step by step, driven before the advance guard of the soldiers.

The chief, cutting his way through the passage, followed by his men, came out into the main entrance hall in the full glare of the pine torches held in the hands of the soldiers, the light cast a deathly glare around and his heart sank in his breast as his eyes beheld the sight before him.

Near the main entrance the soldiers came pouring in, in large numbers, and at their head Major Parson's voice could be heard giving his commands in a stern, manly voice.

"At them, my men, and cut them down to a man."

"Forward, Charge!"

Only for a moment did the chief stand taking in the scene before him, and turning to his men, he said:

"Charge on them, my men, and drive them before you, and never cease till their carcasses float in the river below. Forward and charge as you never did before!"

Suiting the action to his words he darted away to

meet and single out the major, cutting down all before him that opposed his passage.

Both bodies of men met in the middle of the chamber, where a terrible hand-to-hand struggle took place between the soldiers and the robbers.

Above the din of carnage the voice of the outlaw could be heard calling on his men to strike hard for freedom and show no quarter.

The major gave his commands in a steady voice while parrying and returning the blows of the now maddened chief.

The scout's voice seemed to come from all quarters as he moved around, now here and there, slashing and cutting all before him, always near his friends at the right moment.

Two burly robbers were pushing Robert hard when Bob came up. Taking them by the necks in a grasp of iron he knocked their heads together with an unearthly whoop; more like a demon than a man did he appear, and seeming to bear a charmed life.

His large bowie knife stuck between his teeth, reeking with blood, his clothes stained, and his tall form towering above all, struck terror to those of the robbers he attacked.

During all the carnage he never for a moment lost sight of one of his friends and when he saw one of them hard pressed he was by their side in an instant, dealing out death in his passage.

Robert had now caught sight of Larkin in the crowd, flourishing a sword, sticking here and there like a mad man. Robert worked his way toward him,

and Richard, seeing his intentions, came to meet him.

When they met Robert said:

"Ah, cowardly villain, I have now come to settle the score between us, defend yourself."

"O, ho, my bantam, in a few minutes your body will be floating down the river and the insults of the past wiped out."

Fire clashed from their swords as they fell on each other, neither again speaking a word, but each endeavoring to run the other through.

How their duel would have ended is not known, for they were evenly matched in the use of the sword.

Robert, with a cunning fencing trick, sent Richard's sword hurtling through the air, and was about to run him through the heart, saying:

"Villain, you are at my mercy, take your just deserts!"

Hardly were the words spoken ere a pistol shot from Julia's revolver disabled his sword arm and left Robert at her mercy.

"Ha, Julia, you are just in time, kill the young bantam, he is my enemy."

"He may be your enemy, but not mine. Come away, the battle is against us. Father wounded unto death and is now in the council chamber, come!"

Raising her voice high above the din of battle, she shouted:

"Men, desist! your Queen would speak to you!"

"My brave followers, your chief is dying. Give up to the overpowering odds and save your lives."

"The battle is against you, so surrender, is the orders of your chief and Queen!"

When Julia's voice reached the ears of the brigands, and at her command to desist, they threw down their arms.

They could, on looking around them, see the force of her words, for more than one-half of their number lay dead and dying on the stone floor of the cavern, while the numbers of soldiers seemed to have increased, rather than decreased.

They knew it was all up with them, so they submitted to the command of their Queen with reluctance.

In a few moments what was left of the brigands, were manacled and amongst them Richard Larkin.

Major Parsons, now stepping forward to the side of Julia, said:

"Lady, for I know you are such by your voice and words, we will refrain from manacling you on account of your sex."

"Thanks, sir commander."

Robert now came up, followed by Arthur, the detective and Hugh, all bearing marks of the carnage.

Robert was the first to speak:

"Major, with your kind permission, I would ask this lady a question."

"Granted, my boy."

Then addressing Julia, he asked:

"Is there a lady captive confined somewhere in this cavern?"

"No! there is no woman confined in this cavern, but there is a young lady here as my guest."

"Her name, speak?"

"Maud Blackstone."

"Tell me where she is, do not keep me in suspense."

"Follow me and I will lead you to her."

"Thank God, at last. I have regained her."

Julia was about to lead the way to the Council Chamber where lay her father, the robber chief, and where Aunt Hagar and Maud were busily engaged, with the help of the parson, trying to administer to the wants of the dying outlaw; when the detective, in an authoritative voice, cried:

"Stop; where would you go? I have a word to say."

"Where is the chief, your father, Miss?"

"He is now in the Council Chamber dying, where I was about to lead the way."

"Then away, quick, ere it is too late!"

Julia led them through the secret passage where her father lay wounded unto death, from the sword thrust given him by the major.

Through the passage Julia led them into the vast room whose former splendor was now dimmed by the weapons strewn about the floor. To the further side lay her father propped up by cushions.

Maud, standing near now caught sight of Robert Folsom on his entrance to the room out of the secret passage.

Love lent wings to her feet, as she bounded over obstacles that were strewn in her path, to his side.

Throwing herself in his arms, she cried with joy:

"Oh! Robert, you have come for me?"

"Yes, darling; I have come for you, never more to be separated from you."

"Oh! what joy!"

After the meeting of the lovers was over Arthur came forward, whom Maud had not noticed before.

On his speaking to her she looked up at him in surprise:

"You here too! Mr. Blackwell?" this in alarm.

"Yes; Miss Blackstone, here to welcome your freedom."

"Do not be alarmed, Maud, our friend, Mr. Blackwell, knows all, and he is our friend," said Robert.

"This meeting is indeed joy," holding out her hand to Arthur.

"Yes, my little friend, we are all friends now. I know of you love for Robert and respect it, therefore count me in future your humble servant."

"My father and mother. How did you leave them, Arthur?"

"Well and anxiously watching for your appearance."

"Your father is but a short distance from here, and I hope to see you with him shortly."

"O, cannot we go to him now, Robert, and tell him all, and ask his forgiveness?"

"Yes, darling, we will shortly be on the way to him. It is quite a distance from here and we had better await the pleasure of our friends."

"Do not be too hasty, my friends," said Arthur.

"Do not disclose your secret to him yet, but rather wait and let time shape your course, is my advice."

"Oh, Arthur, I cannot live on like this, and keep

this secret from my father, even if he should disown me; but he cannot, he wouldn't be so cruel."

"You do not know him, Maud, as I do. He is proud and unrelenting, if you should cross him, by telling him of your marriage to Robert."

"Our friend is right, darling, and we must remain as we are for the present, in the happiness of each other's love."

"You are always right, Robert, and we will submit to Arthur's advice."

They now turned their attention to the group surrounding the dying chief.

Robert, with his arm clasped around Maud, went forward to those assembled, followed by Arthur.

They came up in time to catch the remark of the detective:

"Have you a surgeon with your men, Major?"

"I have."

"Then send for him immediately. I would have him live until he has unburdened himself, as he seems willing and anxious to do."

The scout was sent to obey the request of the major.

He soon returned with the surgeon, who examined the wounded chief.

"Hurt unto death, hardly two hours to live. Mortal man cannot save him now. I can only keep the man alive with restoratives," said the surgeon.

Placing a flask to the chief's lips, he drank long, which seemed to give him new life.

He then said:

"I know I have not long to live, so I will make a

clean breast of everything. Julia, my child, give me your hand and let my last look be on your face. Your near presence will give me courage."

Julia, now dressed in the garb becoming her sex, placed her arm under her father's head and took his right hand in hers with a tender clasp.

"Daughter, your love bears me up as it has always done in the past, and I must provide for you before I unfold the important secrets that are mine."

"Gentlemen," he continued, "I have a few favors to ask of you before I tell what you want to learn. Do you consent? If not I die with my lips sealed."

"In the name of the government of whom I represent," said the detective, "speak, I adjure you ere it be too late."

"I must be sure before I commence," said the dying chief.

"We promise, if not asking too much," said the detective.

"Then send for Richard Larkin, as he is directly interested."

Larkin was brought in by one of the guard and stood before the chief with downcast eyes.

"Let me have another drink of the cordial raise me a little higher. There, I feel easier now."

"Well you are anxious for me to begin, so I will tell you my wishes first and get your promises as to their fulfillment and if you consent I can then unclothe secrets by which the government will be the gainer.

CHAPTER XLIII

BLACK JACK'S DYING CONFESSION AND REQUEST

"Years ago," commenced Black Jack, "when I was a young man of eighteen, my father died, leaving me the homestead and a few hundred dollars he had saved up. My mother had died when I was six years old and I cannot remember a mother's care.

"My father was a strict disciplinarian and kept me down, more than was good for me. My nature rebelled against this sort of tyranny and when left to my own inclinations after my father's death, is it any wonder I wanted to see life?

"After seeing my father buried, I took all the ready money left me and went to New York to see life in the gay metropolis.

"While there I made the acquaintance of a young man of about my own age, who was leading a fast life.

"His name was Richard Larkin.

"You start, Larkin, but wait till you hear me through. This man was your father and the very image of yourself.

"I very soon found out that my young friend was not gaining his money honorably. One day, when I quizzed him about it he replied that he took life easy and if I would join a certain band of which he was a

member, I need not be without money; but, like himself, be always flush.

"I scorned his proposals at the time, but through his guidance at the gaming tables, I lost the little I had with me.

"I sent to my father's trusted lawyer to try and place a mortgage on the old homestead; but he replied that before such a step could be taken, it would have to go through a certain process of law.

"I was without money in a strange place, and not being able to obtain work, I again mentioned my sad plight to my friend; who, in reply, held out the same proposals as before.

"This time I accepted, and one night I was made a member of a band of counterfeiters.

"I, like Larkin, was placed on the outside, disposing and shoving the queer. At last the detective got wind of the business and made a raid on the place, capturing nearly all of the band.

"Larkin and myself were working a railroad route when we see the report in the papers.

"Instead of going back to New York to be detected by the detectives, whom we knew were looking for us, we went to a small New England town and settled for a few weeks, laying shady and waiting till the excitement blew over.

"Larkin, while there, became enamored of a girl, whom he secretly married, and when we left, his wife went with him.

"We did not care to shove any of the 'queer' so

near New York, so we went to San Francisco to again take up our labors at our old trade.

"Our stock of genuine was ebbing low. Larkin, who was an expert at cards, initiated me into the mysteries of card playing.

"On our route to San Francisco, we took in all the large cities of note, and as we had plenty of money, 'spurious' with us, we exchanged it for 'genuine' at the gaming table.

"Our little deception, never once being detected by our fellow gamblers; who thought us the soul of honor and king of gamblers from our large winnings and the large amount of the 'ready' seen with us.

"When we entered a place we were always made lions of, a seat was always at our command, and as we hardly ever played for small stakes, our games were select and private.

"We started a large gambling establishment, after we had been in San Francisco nearly four years, and were making money hand over fist, when one day we were induced to enter a mining speculation, which swamped us in a year afterward.

"Severing our partnership, I left my friend Larkin and took a trip through the mining districts, making money and again started another gambling house in a fast-growing town in the heart of the mining districts.

"I wrote to my friend Larkin to join me, proposing in the letter to give him a half interest, if he would come. Not receiving an answer from him, as soon as I could leave my business, I left for San Francisco, intending to find him and bring him back with me.

"When I did hear tidings of him, it was to learn of his death. He met his death at the gaming table, so I was told.

"I then turned my attention to his wife and child, and learned that she had died nearly six months before my arrival, and that the son had been sent for and taken charge of by an uncle, in the East.

"My kind intentions were frustrated, so I, after a month's absence from my business turned my steps homeward.

"On the stagecoach I met a young lady journeying to the same place as myself, and being the only passengers of the coach, and the journey being a long one, and companionship was a luxury, we soon picked up an acquaintance with each other, being able, with my knowledge of the country of which we were traveling, to point out places of interest.

"I, learned her history long before we arrived at our journey's end. She was on her way to her father, whom I was well acquainted with.

"When we had reached our destination I was, for the first time, deeply in love, with my fellow passenger. Seeing her to her father's cabin, I asked permission to call on her, which she gave, providing her father was willing.

"Next day I called upon her father, who was pleased to see me, his daughter having given him a glowing account of my agreeable presence on the journey; and knowing nothing of my former career, readily gave his consent to my calling on his daughter.

"It is needless here to dwell on our courtship,

which were the only happy days of my eventful career.

"Three months after our first meeting we were made man and wife, and a year of bliss followed.

"Julia, my daughter here, was the fruit of that marriage, and on her coming into the world, her mother passed out.

"On the death of my wife, I drank deeply, neglecting my business. From that time on for six months I lost heavily, and one day the sheriff made me a visit to close my gaming house and saloon.

"Maddened by drink, and on learning his errand, I shot him down in cold blood.

"I ran into the foothills, and in time I worked my way to San Francisco; where for a year I made money at the gaming table.

"After getting a good stake, I left again for New York, where one day I met my former chief of the band of counterfeiters of whom I had been a member.

He had served his time in the penitentiary and was out of funds. We had a long conversation, the import of which was that we there and then made plans for another secret brotherhood, I to furnish the capital and be its head, while he acted as assistant-chief.

"His acquaintance with all the 'fly' men of the city was invaluable to our plans.

"One month from the time we had formed our plans everything connected with counterfeiting apparatus was safely collected, and even the best skilled workmen in the art of engraving were at work on new plates.

"When everything was well under way, I sent my trusty adviser to my former mountain home for my child and her grandfather.

"I furnished a house on one of the best and most fashionable quarters in New York and there took up my residence with my daughter and her ever watchful grandfather.

"All the money I wanted to further the scheme was forthcoming from the Jewish money-lender on the promise of a rich harvest when business became brisk.

"One year after the eastern market was running over with the 'queer,' in whose utterance hundreds of men were busily engaged.

"All this time I was living like a prince, my neighbors supposing me a millionaire from the magnificent turn-outs that each day left my establishment.

"I was looked upon by business men as a man of unlimited wealth, and so indeed I was, for in less than one year I was a millionaire.

"One night, on reaching the rendezvous where our illegitimate business was done, one of the agents whom I had dogging the secret-service men, and who was one of their paid and trusted men, reported to me that on Wednesday night—it was then Tuesday night—a raid would be made on us, when they knew that most of us would be in. I sent off my agents to call in all the others, by means only known to men in our business, to attend a secret meeting to take place at twelve that night, and then hurried home to instruct my father-in-law how to dispose of my property and to select a school where Julia could be placed, as I

was compelled to leave the city for an indefinite period.

"I kissed Julia and bade my father good-bye and hurried back to headquarters, where I found most of my band awaiting my appearance.

"I then explained matters to them in brief and told them of my intention to leave New York, and all those in favor of my plan might come with me, as their only safety lay in flight.

"Nearly all of the band were with me in leaving.

"I then instructed my confidential agent to engage a schooner we had once before used, and which was at the time at anchor near by; to hire the schooner at any price, if need be.

"While he was off I had my men pack up all our tools and machinery in strong boxes and sacks and on the return of my assistant we were ready for instant departure.

"Through a secret passage, known only to the brotherhood, which led to the lake, we carried our counterfeiting materials, and placing them in the yawls, that were on hand, manned by the captain and his not over-virtuous crew, we took our seats and a short time after we had them stowed safely away in the hold of the schooner.

"Bidding the captain to sail to a point I gave him at daybreak, and telling my men to lay low until well out of danger, I took my departure, first enjoining on my assistant to follow the directions I gave him till I came up with him.

"Next day, as soon as banking hours came round, I

went to my banks and drew from each all the money standing to my credit.

"Before noon I was well on my way in a disguise that was hard to penetrate.

"On the morning of the next day I came up with my men. My agent had followed my instructions to the letter, when on reaching his side, I found an emigrant train ready to start on their journey.

"As we went through the country in our new disguise we bought up cattle and horses as we went along; thus giving to those we met an appearance of settlers. This we have kept up from time to time ever since.

"Now you have part of my history, it now lays with you whether you have the rest which is the more important of the two," looking at the detective.

"Well, what is it you wish me to promise?"

"This, I have a large sum of money buried, the secret of its hiding place dies with me if my wishes are not gratified."

"How much do you consider a large sum of money?" said the detective.

"Two million dollars! most of it legally belonging to the U. S. Government, the rest to me."

"Well, what do you wish regarding this sum?"

"I want two hundred thousand of this sum to be legally settled on my daughter, the rest to revert to the government."

"This wish is granted."

"Then put it down in black and white and I will rest more easy."

Pen and paper was brought by Hagar and the detective assigned Arthur to do the writing. After the promise was duly signed and witnessed by the detective and witnessed by all present, the detective said:

"Now that is settled, what next?"

"I will tell you after I have first asked a few questions of Larkin and Julia."

"Richard Larkin," said the chief. Do you still hold the marriage vows between yourself and my daughter as sacred and binding."

"I do, but I'm afraid it will do us no good one way or the other. I am in for a pretty good term in prison and I don't think that Julia will care to wait till I regain my freedom."

"Enough!" said the chief.

"Julia, do you hold your marriage sacred and binding to Richard Larkin?"

"I do, father."

"And you love him?"

"With my whole soul and being."

"Enough!"

"Now, Mr. Detective, my second wish is that this young man go free?"

"Impossible."

"But he must!"

"I have not all to say regarding him. There are others who have also claims on him."

"Granted that there may be; but you must promise to use your influence towards saving him."

"I will promise my support in this, if it will ease your mind on that score."

"It will, it will!"

"Then your second wish is granted!"

"Make it legal, by placing it on paper."

Arthur again wrote out another legal document, which was also duly signed and witnessed.

"Have you any other wish to gratify?"

"None whatever; I am perfectly satisfied."

"Then continue your story."

"I will, but first hand these papers to my daughter."

The detective took the papers from Arthur and handed them to Julia, who placed them in her bosom.

The chief drew his daughter's head close to him and whispered in her ear for a few moments. Aloud he said:

"I have just told my daughter where the money is hidden, on her assurance that all that is agreed to between us in the papers you have given her, she will show you the hiding place. Are you satisfied?"

"I am."

"Then I will give you the rest of my story."

CHAPTER XLIV

THE OUTLAW'S CONFESSION CONTINUED

"Entering Texas about five years ago we beat about the state committing all kinds of depredations and with no fixed place of resort.

"I was supposed by cattlemen to be a large cattle owner having more money than I knew what to do with, from the foolish speculations and sales I made from time to time.

"After roving about the state for nearly a year, one day some of my men were caught in the act of a most dastardly deed, and were followed and captured by the Texan Rangers.

"They were tried and convicted according to their law, and I was more zealous than the rest in their conviction.

"The Rangers were for instant punishment of the outlaws found guilty; but I being a large cattleman and having considerable influence with the Rangers on account of my princely donations, for their maintenance from time to time, prevailed on them to give the culprits one night in which to repent before being shot.

"That night the guard over the prisoners was surprised by my men in the guise of Indians, and the culprits freed, we saw them across the border into

Mexican territory mounted on fleet-footed horses and well provisioned.

"Bidding them to find a safe retreat for a time until we were ready to immigrate with them I returned to my ranch with the rest of my followers.

"A week after their escape one of them came to me and reported the existence of a cave in the Indian Nation and of its many advantages as a safe retreat for our business.

"I returned with him, accompanied by a few of my followers loaded down with provisions.

"On examination of the cave I found it to be just the place I had been seeking for a safe retreat to carry on our counterfeiting, and forthwith I gave orders to have the materials removed to this cave.

"For five years we have carried on the business of counterfeiting and illicit distilling under the eyes of the government servants, little dreaming that we were other than we appeared, honest cattlemen.

"How successfully we have been is now known to you, Mr. Detective.

"I retained my large cattle ranch in Texas for appearance sake and to-day am known as the largest cattle king of the west.

"Now for the disclosure of some of the most important secrets of which I promised you, Mr. Detective, and of which the U. S. Government is as yet in the dark.

"About a year ago a young man came to my ranch with a letter of introduction from Mr. Prierly, another large cattle owner, stating that he had been in his

employ for nearly three months, but on account of some misunderstanding between the bearer and his overseer he wished to leave his ranch and join his fortunes with mine. On the strength of the recommend I hired the young man at once and sent him out with the herders, giving instructions as was my wont, to one of my most trusty men, to never once lose sight of him, and to gain his confidence if possible.

"I mistrusted every stranger until by a course I pursued found them trustworthy and had confidence in them.

"The first report of my trusty follower was to the effect that the young man in question had committed a great crime in the East, for which he had to flee from the grasp of the law.

"The next report was that he kept a memorandum book in which he always jotted down the day's incidents, as he informed my man.

"On one occasion he tore a leaf out of this same book and handed it in an inclosed envelope to one of a party of drovers who were on their way to ship their cattle.

"I informed my servant that the next letter sent by this person must be stopped and brought direct to me.

"Not long after I proposed sending off a herd for shipment to the East.

"My servant, who had charge of the herding, and acted as a kind of overseer, told the young man of my intention.

"Simpkins' as he called himself, asked the overseer if he could make one of the party detailed to drive

the cattle, but was told by the overseer that he could be of more use where he was.

"He then asked permission to write a letter to be taken to the post, which was granted.

"The letter written was brought direct to me.

"I at once saw by the contents, which were in shorthand, and of which I was master, that I was harboring one of the government secret-service men.

"The letter read:

" 'Secret Service Department,

" 'Washington, D. C.

" 'Since my last report, nothing as yet has transpired to give the least warranty that my business here is suspected. I have full confidence of one of his employees, but before long I will worm myself further into his confidence, and if, as I suspect, I will be able to give you news of a startling character. I tried hard to carry this to post myself, but was compelled to stay and I send it by one of the herders.

" 'As ever faithful,

" 'CHAS. ANDREWS.'

"I had the letter redirected by one of my experts in copying signatures, and had it forwarded on to its destination, as directed.

"How much was known at the department I did not know until I possessed the memorandum book of the detective.

"To gain its possession I must and for that purpose I sent for him by two trusty men.

"Not wishing him to suspect of any design on my

OUTLAW'S CONFESSION CONTINUED 253

part I gave orders to have him bring to the ranch several cows that I wished to dispose of to another ranchman and in company with these two men he made his appearance at the ranch next day.

"After the cattle were taken care of I invited the three men into the ranch for refreshments.

"I had prepared some drugged wine and liquor, but suspecting foul play from us, he refused to drink of either.

"Giving my men the wink he was set upon, and secured, but not before one of my men went to his last account by a well directed bullet from young Andrews' revolver and myself receiving a flesh wound on the arm.

"On searching his clothes the memorandum book was found in an inside pocket.

"In perusing its contents I learned that he had not gained enough evidence against me to convict me or to cause my apprehension by the government.

"I also learned that my true identity was not even suspected.

"My plan of action was now before me and that night we took young Andrews to the cave."

"You surely have not harmed young Andrews? said Crawford."

"Wait patiently and you shall learn," said Black Jack.

"That night I called a meeting of all the brotherhood and I made them acquainted with all I had learned.

"All of the band were in favor, on a vote being cast,

to forever put it out of his way to do us further harm, but I would not hear of it.

"I had the prisoner brought in this very room and gave orders to our blacksmith to weld shackles on his feet and arms and also around his body and then before all my men he was fastened to a chain in the Grotto chamber, from which place he could never hope to escape.

"This action of mine satisfied my men and quieted their fears and in order that his life might be spared I had one of my men detailed to bring him his meals regularly and never to stint him in anything.

"Then after securing our prisoner in this manner again entered in conclave and I had one of the experts draft another report, copying the hand of the prisoner and forwarding on to Washington to the same address as before.

"In this report it was stated that he was now satisfied that I was an inoffensive man and a strong lover of justice. That on the next day he would take his departure to Pierre Lancelot's ranch, ten miles further up the trail from my ranch, as he had learned enough to convince him that he was in crooked business.

"I knew that Lancelot was engaged in crooked business in regard to Indian supplies, as he was in cohorts with the Indian commissioners and received stolen goods that should have gone to the Indians.

"Thus I gave the government a pointer to distract them from us.

"Next day I dressed one of my men in the prisoner's clothes and got him up to represent the detective as

near as possible, and with a note to Pierre Lancelot, sent him to his ranch to hire out, and if possible to kick up such a row with one of Lancelot's men and fight a duel so that he might have an excuse for leaving the ranch and coming back to us.

"Fate seemed to favor us, for in the duel my man was killed and the news of the encounter reaching me, I had the remains taken away and secretly buried.

"The incidents of this scene were forgotten by myself and men when one day I was summoned to the ranch from the cave, where I had been inspecting the work of my men.

"My informant told me that a stranger was anxious to see me on business of importance.

"Suspecting who was awaiting my appearance I hurried away to the ranch, where I found a tall stranger waiting for me.

"This man had a dark, piercing eye and when he looked at you he seemed to reach into your very soul and read your innermost thoughts.

"He introduced himself as Mr. Redmond of the Secret-Service Bureau at Washington.

"I was surprised that he should introduce himself to me as such, and putting himself directly in my power.

"When he spoke my fears were at rest as regarding myself and those belonging to me.

"I will give you the conversation that took place between us on that occasion:

" 'From information I have I know you to be a law-abiding citizen, Mr. Price.' By this name I was known by the ranchmen throughout the west.

"'By what means I have learned this is no secret,' continued the U. S. detective.

"'About six months ago a young man by the name of Simpkins entered your employment as a herdsman.'

"I nodded in the affirmative.

"'This young Simpkins was not a herdsman as you might infer, but a secret-service detective.'

"I put on a look of mock surprise and remarked: 'Surely, Mr. Redmond, he see nothing about my ranch that warranted him in suspecting me of any crime against the government, of which I have the most profound respect?'

"'Far from it, but you know it is our business to suspect every one until we are sure of their calling.

"'Simpkins, by which name he gave you when he entered your employ, but whose real name was Andrews, seems to have disappeared and no tidings of his whereabouts have yet been learned by the detective bureau at Washington.

"'The Bureau, fearing foul play of some kind, sent me out here to hunt him up, and seeing the last report sent in from your ranch by him, vouching for your good standing, I came direct to you for some information regarding the parties of whom he was employed last.'

"'Thanks for the good opinion you hold of me. Anything I can do for you in the matter of finding this young man, I will gladly do.'

"'Well, this Pierre Lancelot, what of him?'

" 'I know but very little about him, but what little I do suspect, I would rather not make public.'

" 'Bosh, man, do you know you are, by holding anything back, shielding one of the greatest scoundrels on earth, and perhaps an enemy to the government that you owe allegiance to?'

" 'That being the case, I will not stand on ceremony longer,' I replied.

" 'Spoken like a true citizen.'

" 'In the first place it is whispered about here that Lancelot is dealing in government supplies that belong to the Indians.'

" 'Ah! an important clew.'

" 'It is also said that he is in some way connected with a gang of counterfeiters. This, of course, is merely rumor, and as to the truth of it I cannot vouch.'

" 'Good! go on!'

" 'My men have noticed loose characters about his ranch on several occasions and they advised me that our stock might be in danger. I have missed several hundred head of cattle from my herd at the roundup; but if I did suspect Lancelot, I have not been able to detect his action in their disappearance.'

" 'Of course, of course, go on.'

" 'This is all I can tell, with the exception of an occasional visit from the Indian Commissioners.'

" 'Enough, indeed to warrant his arrest if I find your surmises to be true. But now as to young Simpkins. When did he leave your employ?'

" 'About three months ago he came to me and asked

me for a recommend to Pierre Lancelot, stating that he wished to enter his employ. I tried to prevail on him to stay with me, as I had began to take a deep interest in him, but he would not hear to it, but persisted in leaving, so I wrote him a recommend to Lancelot.'

" 'Have you heard since from this young man.'

" 'Yes, shortly after he left my employ, I learned from one of my men that young Simpkins had had a quarrel with another man and was shot in a duel.'

" 'Horrible, no doubt he was murdered, but they shall pay dearly for it,' replied the secret detective.

"The detective took his departure after he had dined with me. I tried to prevail on him to make this his headquarters while in the neighborhood, but he would not hear of it.

"I was on the alert and instructed my men to do the same until I should give them permission.

"My first move was to send one of my best men to dog the footsteps of the secret service man, and to another I confided a box containing several thousands of bogus bills, with instructions to hide them about the premises of Pierre Lancelot.

"One week after, the detective, Mr. Redmond, called upon me again to invoke my aid, in the name of the government of which he served, to help him arrest Pierre Lancelot and his whole force.

"I reluctantly gave my consent, and that night accompanied by several resident ranchmen and their herders arrested Pierre Lancelot and his whole band of followers.

"Everything I had surmised about Lancelot was

found to be true, even to the finding of the spurious bills.

"He is now, as you know, with a large number of his followers, undergoing a sentence imposed upon them from the evidence found on his premises.

"I would die easier if I knew that justice were done him and those of his men whom I know to be innocent.

"My confession is now ended, Mr. Detective, and as to all the secrets of this cavern I will leave to be explained by my daughter, who will show you every secret hiding place.

"Julia, tighten your clasp on my hand, I cannot feel any more, and my eyes are growing dim.

"I feel death approaching. Water, a drink of pure fresh water."

Water was given the dying bandit and he drank long copious draughts.

"Where is the minister? I want him to——"

The bandit never finished his last remark, but lay gasping, his head pillowed in his daughter's arms, while she reigned hot kisses on his death-cold lips.

Tearing himself free with a last effort, he stood erect for a moment, and then fell full length on the stone floor with a dull thud, dead.

Julia knelt by his side, weeping, and was left thus for a few moments, when Crawford, the detective, touched her on the arm, and said:

"Come, Julia, he is over all his troubles at last and weeping will do him no good now. He is better

thus, and you should be happier as it turned out for him."

"You are right, my friend, papa is much better off than locked in a prison for life."

"Then come away and lead me to the grotto where the man is confined."

CHAPTER XLV

THE TREASURE ROOM OF THE BRIGANDS

Julia, the bandit's daughter, led the detective, followed by the rest, through one passage after another winding in different directions.

Noise of falling water reached the ears of the party, and soon they came into full view of a beautiful little miniature lake, and high above a small stream of water fell into it. The water of the stream coming from the height it did, gave the spray the appearance of a large veil.

The scene, lit up by the pine torches they carried is past description.

Julia led the party behind the spray of falling water to a large grotto, where to a chain fastened in the wall and held firmly in place by a bar of iron driven into a crevice that the hand of man could not displace without the aid of instruments. A loop at the end of this bar, protruding from the crevice held a large ring, and from it suspended the chain which held the prisoner.

Reclining on a couch of furs lay the prisoner, who started up into a sitting posture when he heard the footsteps of the rescuers, remarking:

"Ha! friends! you have come to put me out of my

misery. So be it. Welcome death to this torture!"

"We are not enemies, but your friends, come to release you," said the detective.

"Merciful heaven! God has heard my prayer. But I cannot see you!"

"No doubt you have been confined so long in the darkness that your eyes are not accustomed to the light, but in a few days with proper care you will be all right."

Then turning to Major Parsons the detective said:

"Major, have you a man in your command that understands the taking off of these manacles?"

"Yes, our smith is with us!"

"I will send him here immediately."

Major Parsons was about to retrace his steps when the scout intercepted him.

"Wait here, Major, and I'll go after ther man. I know ther way," and the scout darted away without ceremony.

Soon the scout and the blacksmith returned, bearing with them the necessary tools, and in a very short time the shackles of the prisoner were removed, being too weak to walk, he was carried out to more comfortable quarters.

Julia, now leaning on the arm of Richard Larkin left the grotto, followed by the detective.

Maud and Robert, chattering freely together with clasped hands came next followed by Arthur Blackstone and Major Parsons.

The Scout, Squint-Eyed Bob, and Hugh, had borne

the helpless detective away between them, promising to soon return.

This group were standing on the edge of the miniature lake when the scout and Hugh came back.

Julia and Richard now went forward into another passage from the one they came by. They had not gone more than forty steps ere they came to an abrupt stop.

When they had all come up Julia touched what seemed to the rest of the party a small rocky projection. A buzzing sound was heard for a few moments.

After the sound had ceased and as if by magic, a large room met their view. Julia turned and explained:

"Papa had a canvas painted to represent the rock and to fit the entrance of this store room. The canvas rolls up like a curtain in an instant. So much does this curtain resemble the rock that even you my friends thought it part and parcel of the rock. See this is the way it works."

Julia again touched a spring when the same sound occurred. The curtain now was seen to unfold itself, but much more slowly than in raising.

She again touched the spring and when the curtain had again raised she entered the room, saying:

"Here is where is stored the wealth of the brigands, also the most of the counterfeit money."

Around this room was scattered packages of spurious paper bills of large and small denomination. In small wooden boxes gold coins were closely packed while in a large chest marked the "united brotherhood

treasury," could be seen a vast amount of wealth of good money.

"How did each man know how much was belonging to him," asked the detective of Julia.

"Oh, easy enough. One of the men acted as book-keeper and treasurer, who kept each man's account separate from the rest.

"When one of the men wanted money he got an order from papa or the lieutenant, and if there was money to his credit, the amount he asked for was given him.

"If there was no money standing to his credit on the books he was allowed a certain sum, one hundred dollars, I think, was the limit, was allowed him out of the sinking fund, which would be charged against him as a loan on trust.

"Very seldom a member of the brotherhood ever had occasion to have his name entered in the trust book, for very few of the old members had a chance to spend a quarter of their savings.

"It was only when a new member came into the band that the trust fund came to be used.

"At the death of a member, all his savings were shared by the brotherhood."

"Then I infer from what you say that your father's savings are also in this box."

"Not all, only a small part. Father did not trust his men to that extent. When he started counterfeiting in the East he borrowed heavily from the money lenders, who were ever ready to advance where they could see a rich harvest of gain. With this

money he started, paying them all back with heavy interest.

"When he was compelled to leave the States, in order to keep his men together he promised them that thereafter one-half of the net profits should be divided among them, instead of a percentage, while one-fourth would be divided between six of his aides. Four of these six did the intricate work on the plates for counterfeiting and the other two—one acted as agent and one as his lieutenant."

"Then your father's share of the net earnings would be the other fourth?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Then your father has a private place of deposit?"

"He has!"

"Have any of the others places where they deposit their money?"

"Yes, I am certain they have!"

"Ah, that explains why vast sums of money are found from time to time.

"Do you know how much money is now in the treasury?"

"I do not, but the books of the treasurer will explain. Mr. Judkins, who had charge, can tell you."

"Where are the books now?"

"They are in a desk in the Council Chamber."

"Then lead the way, but first show me how to work the secret springs."

Julia showed the detective the workings of the secret springs, when he was confident of his success to manage them he let the curtain fall in its place.

"How many of the band knows of this secret entrance?"

"Judkins and myself are the only ones alive in the band that know of the treasury vault."

"Why does not all of the band know of its existence?"

"Because in keeping it a secret, it kept the band from entertaining thoughts of mutiny."

"Ah! I see."

"Now lead the way to the Council Chamber."

On entering the Council Chamber, Major Parsons sent one of his orderlies who was near by to go after Judkins, who soon came forward, guarded on either side by two soldiers.

His wrists were ironed and at a word from the major they were taken off.

The detective then said to him:

"Judkins, I wish to examine the books of the treasury. Get them for me."

"I will die first!"

Not so fast, my man, the whole thing is known to me, even to the secret vault, where I have just come from after an inspection of its contents."

Judkins looked at Julia for an explanation, who hurriedly said:

"It is even so, Mr. Judkins, father confessed all to these gentlemen before he died."

"Then if that is the case I have no wish to keep anything back."

Judkins stepped to a desk and taking a key from his pocket unlocked one of the drawers, taking there-

from one of the books, and in a loud clear voice he said:

"The brotherhood consisted of forty-eight members on the first of this present month.

"The total amount in the treasury at the beginning of this month was two million and a half dollars, in good money."

"Now tell us how much spurious money you have?"

"On the first of last month there was deposited in the treasury nine millions of counterfeit bills and coin."

"Have you an itemized list of how much spurious money there has been put in circulation for the past three months by your agents?"

"I have."

"That will do, now lock up that drawer after you put the book away and hand the key to me."

"Major, you will see that this man is well guarded."

"That I will," replied the major.

"Now Miss Julia, you may show us the other secrets of this cavern."

Julia led the party into the counterfeiting room or workshop, of which we gave a description of in a former chapter, also to the distillery, and all through the places of which the reader is familiar with.

Returning again to the Council Chamber the major learned that the ambulances which he had ordered had arrived, and the major and the detective, bidding the rest to stay where they were, went to issue orders.

The wounded were placed on stretchers and carried to the ambulances.

Detailing a large squad of soldiers as a guard for the cave and bidding them to be on the alert for stragglers, and to bury the dead, they went back to the Council Chamber.

The detective then said to Julia:

"Is there another passage leading from this place except the main entrance? I wish to avoid taking you ladies past the scene of last night's carnage if possible."

There is one that leads almost to the top of the bluff and the only one that I know of."

"Then lead us to it."

"You will not tear me away from papa?"

"I will see that his body is brought to the ambulances."

As they were about to leave the apartment Maud now spoke up:

"Where is good old Aunt Hagar, we must not leave her here?"

"I'se here chile, an' am ready for de jubilee. Golly, chile, but dis am de day ob judgment."

"Then come along quick if you don't want to be left here behind with the ghosts of the cavern," said the detective.

"Golly, what is guyne to come ob dis yer chile ob sin? dun gone out ob yere double quick, massa detective."

Julia led them through the passage to the secret door and in a few minutes they were on top of the bluff breathing heaven's pure air.

The detective stepped up to Larkin and bade him

mount one of the horses brought from the fort. Two soldiers, also mounted, took positions on either side of him.

Julia and the negress were placed in one of the wagons.

Maud expressed a wish that she might ride beside Robert on the journey to the Fort the good major had a horse brought forward for her use.

The prisoners being brought from the cavern and under strong guard the cavalcade took up the march for Fort Seward. Some of the party with joyous and light hearts and others with misgivings for their future.

After reaching the fort Major Parsons did all in his power to entertain his friends in his bachelor quarters.

The ladies were assigned apartments where they could rest and on dinner being announced they came out of their apartments, looking fresh and blooming.

Maud, during her short term of release, had picked up wonderfully. The leaden cast in her eyes when seen in her confinement, had disappeared and a brightness now took its place and the old merry twinkle could be discerned. On either cheek a bright scarlet flush took the place of the paleness of but a few hours ago.

In Julia's case it was vice versa, and she seemed more like a ghost than her former self, when we first made her acquaintance in the cavern on the night of Larkins' initiation into the brotherhood.

Robert seemed like a boy who had found something he had lost, so boyish and full of life was he.

The detective was all smiles, and could be seen running here and there, giving instructions regarding the prisoners.

Squint-Eyed Bob and his friend, Hugh Muldoon, were going among the soldiers and poking fun and talking over and over again the scenes of the last night.

Major Parsons now sent his orderly after the truants to bring them to mess, so that his family might all sit down together, as he expressed it.

Aunt Hagar had installed herself in the kitchen, busily looking after the culinary affairs of that department, and giving her commands, to the delight of the men assistants.

CHAPTER XLVI

THE BURIAL OF THE ROBBER CHIEFTAIN

All of the major's guests now being present they were invited to seats around the table in the dining room of the block house in Fort Seward.

All allusions to the late encounter between the bandits, was through mutual consent, dropped out of the conversation, out of regard for Julia's feelings.

Toasts were given and received by those present, but bearing no allusion to the past, but for the present and future success of all concerned.

It could plainly be observed that the major intended that his friends should not leave his table hungry, judging from the bountiful repast spread before them.

Maud and Julia, who shared the meagre fare of the cavern, did ample justice to their appetites and ate of the frugal repast, not sparingly, but with a gusto and relish, that pleased and delighted the major.

Squint-Eyed Bob and Hugh Muldoon proved themselves to be regular gormandizers, and proved their stomachs to be as capacious as their largeness of heart.

The meal passed off as the major intended it should, to the satisfaction of all.

The men excused themselves to the ladies and adjourned to the smoking room.

Maud and Julia entered the sitting room arm in arm.

"My sister Julia, for I will now call you such, if you will allow me, will you not promise me to come home with me and be my own sweet sister and companion, papa and mamma will welcome you to their hearts, when I tell them how kind you have been to me, and how you saved me from Richard."

"Hush, my friend, you do not know what you would do."

"I know, Julia, that I would try to relieve a friend to whom I owe more than my life."

"Go with you and be sneered at as the robber's daughter, and moreover bring shame upon your house?"

"No one need know that you had any connection with these bad men, Julia."

"But they soon will, for once I am placed upon the witness stand the whole world will know. So, my dear friend Maud, I would not be the cause of any annoyance to you or your friends. I will place myself in the hands of Mr. Crawford, the detective, and I know he will see that I am properly cared for until all is over."

"Is this your final answer, Julia?"

"It is."

"After you are free what will you do. Where will you go?"

"I do not know. I cannot now say. But of one thing I am certain. If Richard Larkin really loves me as he has lately assured me we will go to Europe, and once there we will live a retired life."

"Do you really love Richard, Julia?"

With my whole heart."

"Then I will prevail on father to forgive him, and help, with his influence, to set him free."

"My darling Maud, you could not say anything that would give me more joy than your words just now. That is what Richard told me he feared most, the just wrath of your father, Colonel Blackstone."

"Then, Julia, you may rest content, that when I have told my father all, that he will withdraw from punishing Richard, however severe he has sinned against him. Father is not one to hold malice toward any one."

"Then I shall go to Richard and tell him of your goodness of heart."

"And I'll go too and assure him that he is forgiven and that he may have hope."

"Not now, ladies," said the detective. "After a while I will have him brought to a place where you may have a talk with him, but you must forego your visit now."

Miss Julia, your father is soon to be placed in his last resting place, and if you wish to take a last look at him before he is placed beneath the clay, you will take my arm, if you please."

"Oh! my father, I had forgotten during the excitement. Oh, lead me to him."

The detective led Julia out to one of the large sheds built close to the side of the stockade, where on a stretcher lay the brigand chief, and near him a rough pine box.

Julia threw herself on the cold form and covered his cold lips with tears and kisses.

The detective and the soldiers turned and walked away to hide their emotions.

To see this beautiful girl in tears melted the strong hearts of these rough men as nothing else would have done.

If you would have told the soldiers that they could have respect for this dead robber chief, whose hand was red with crime, but a moment before the appearance of the daughter, they would have laughed at you; but such is really true the world over.

The sight of this weeping and stricken girl weeping over that hardened and inanimate form softened their hearts, for they knew from instinct that whatever were the robber's faults or crimes he must have loved his child, else she would not have been so stricken.

The detective, after a few minutes, returned and led Julia away, motioning to the soldiers, they laid the form of the Chief in the rough box with a tenderness they could not believe themselves capable of up to this minute.

The remains of the Chief were taken out on the prairie where a deep hole was dug for his grave.

Julia stood by with the detective and saw the last clod heaped on the mound, and at her request a rough board was put up as a headstone.

Returning to the fort the detective gave out his intention of taking his prisoners to Baxter Springs as soon as the major could get them ready for departure.

Major Parsons gave out his orders, detailing a com-

pany of fifty men to accompany the detective and his prisoners to his destination at Washington.

Major Parsons signified his intention of himself accompanying them as far as Baxter in order to see Colonel Blackstone and make his acquaintance.

Robert and Maud had ridden out on the prairie while the funeral of the brigand was taking place. They had, no doubt, settled the difficult question of their future action toward making their marriage public.

On their return the cavalcade drove away.

The ride to Baxter was necessarily a slow one, on account of the prisoners, who were on foot and locked to a long chain, which was held fast at either end by being attached to two cavalry horses. A soldier, heavily armed, walked at the side of each robber.

The detective, aware of the desperate character of the men, took desperate means to hold his prisoners.

On either side of the chain-gang, with carbines poised for instant use, rode a file of soldiers.

Richard Larkin was saved the disgrace of being chained with the rest. He was seated on a horse, his hands locked with the bracelets on his wrists, and resting on the pommel of his saddle.

In this order they entered the streets of Baxter Springs.

CHAPTER XLVII

JIM BLAKELY AND HIS PARD, SHAG ANDREWS, OF THE GOLDEN LION, IN THE FOILS OF THE GOVERNMENT

As the cavalcade entered the main street of Baxter Springs, the merchants of the street flocked to their doors, while windows, overhead were thrown up in private residences, and eager and anxious inquiring looks were cast on the motley crowd as they marched down the street.

Passing the Golden Lion on their way Scar-Faced Jim was seen standing in the door of his place.

Turning to one of his particular chums near him, he remarked:

"I told you so!"

"Yes you told me that those chaps as acted ther Yankees were mor'n they looked. But yer didn't tell me thet our turn would come next, did yer?"

"No, I didn't, but when I do, it will be a long way off, you bet."

"I hopes so."

"Did you recognize any of the chain-gang?"

"Yes, nearly all on 'em!"

"I didn't see Black Jack in the crowd. I guess he has given them the slip. I hope so, at any rate."

"Yes, it's better for our peace of mind if he has, Jim."

"You bet."

"Come, let us find out the particulars. I am anxious to know how it was anyway."

"Better keep yer head out of the lion's mouth, Jim, and stay at home."

"Oh! I am not afraid that there is anyone there that could give me away."

But Jim Blakely, or Scar-Faced Jim, had for the moment forgotten about the teamster that had brought him illicit whisky from time to time, as also the book-keeper Judkins who had kept a faithful account of all the sales of whisky to their customers.

Not owing Jim any good will on account of their losses in his place, it would take but very little to peach on him.

Jim and his friend came up with the prisoners and edging his way to where the teamster stood tried to speak to him, but was driven away by the soldiers.

"Where is the boss in charge of this gang?" said Jim of one of the soldiers.

"He has gone to the Planter's Hotel to see a friend, I suppose," replied the soldier addressed.

"Is there anyone here in charge during his absence?"

"Yes, the captain sits over yonder," pointing with his index finger to where the captain was seated.

Jim and his friend went over to the captain and asked permission to speak to one of the prisoners.

"I cannot give my consent to hold converse with the

prisoners to anyone, but if you wait until Mr. Crawford returns, perhaps he will give his permission."

"Who is this Crawford?"

"A detective of the government, and we are placed under his orders by Major Parsons."

Detective Crawford now made his appearance in company with Major Parsons.

Jim Blakely extended his hand to the major who took it and then introduced Jim to the detective.

Major Parsons knew Blakely to be an old settler in the place and an influential citizen.

Blakely addressed the detective:

"I understand that you are in command of these prisoners?"

"I am, Major Parsons gave me the important charge."

"Can I speak to one of them a few moments?"

The detective looked at Blakely a few minutes before answering him.

"You can!" said the detective.

"Thanks I only wanted to speak to him about a little amount he owes me."

"Then, my friend, I can tell you what you can do with the account, you may enter it to profit and loss, but however you may speak with him."

Blakely and his friend turned away and at a sign from the detective to the soldiers on guard, Blakely and his friend were allowed to speak with the teamster.

The detective turned to Major Parsons and said:

"That man Blakely is a deep-dyed scoundrel if there ever was one, and I have a presentiment that he

and I shall be better acquainted before long. His story about the little debt is a deliberate falsehood."

"Why, you should not speak so of your fellowmen unless you are sure."

"We detectives have a way of judging others, a natural instinct that grows on us day by day, and I know I am not mistaken; but we will see before long, rest assured."

"Perhaps you judge him by the business he is following, that of gambling?"

"No, I will show you by what I judge him."

With this last remark the detective started forward to where the teamster was standing joined by the chain to the rest of the gang. Blakely and his friend were just disappearing around the corner.

The detective took a key out of his pocket and unlocked the hand-cuff of the prisoner.

All looked on the actions of the detective in surprise when he led the teamster out of their ranks. Snapping one of the loops of the hand-cuff on his own wrist he led the prisoner to where the major was standing, and out of hearing of the rest of the robbers, he said:

"Now, Major, you will know how far wrong I was in my attack on this honored citizen."

"Now, my man," said the detective, addressing himself to the prisoner, "did you know those men who have just left you?"

"No, I do not!"

"You will find your voice soon enough when I tell you that the short one with the long scar on his cheek,

is Jim Blakely and proprietor of the Golden Lion, and the person who first gave your gang away."

"Blakely give us away, why, he is even worse than we are."

"Ah, you found your tongue. I thought if your memory was jogged up a bit you would know who that man was."

"Yes, I know Blakely and his pard, Shag Andrews, and if, as you say, he has given us away, I will give him away also and tell you all I know about the dastardly cur, who to save his own neck, gives away the very men who have bolstered him up for years."

"Now, then, what did he say to you when he was conversing with you?"

"He asked me how it came about that we were taken prisoners, the cur himself knowing all the time."

"What else?"

"He then asked what had become of Black Jack."

"Anything else?"

"Yes, he told me to keep mum about him and he would see what he could do for me."

"What do you know of him?"

"I know that he held dealings with Black Jack."

"In what respect."

"Buying and disposing of illicit whisky and spurious money."

"How do you know this?"

"I acted as teamster in the band and delivered the stuff to him."

"Good! Now what of his chum?"

"They are pardners, and Shag Andrews is as deep in the mud as Jim Blakely is in the mire."

"How do I know but that you are telling me a falsehood to be avenged on Blakely for giving you away?"

"Ask Judkins, he kept the books and knows of all the transactions of the band."

"Good, we will go to Judkins."

The detective led the prisoner over to where Judkins stood, and said:

"Judkins, this man here told me that you knew Jim Blakely to be a receiver of counterfeit money and illicit whisky, is it so?"

"I don't know anything regarding Jim Blakely."

"But Blakely gave us away to the detective, and on that account and information we are now prisoners. Will you shield a traitor who has blabbed on us?" replied the teamster.

"No, by —, I will not."

"Then he is all that this man tells us?"

"Yes, and a bigger villain than he is, never walked the earth."

"Well, we will see how long he walks the earth free."

"How about his partner?"

"The same!"

The detective now shackled the two men near each other that they could talk together, and bidding the captain to put an extra guard over these two men, and to pick out ten of his men and follow them to the Golden Lion, where he and Major Parsons intended to go and make an important arrest.

The detective and Major Parsons entered the Golden Lion.

Jim Blakely and his partner were near the end of the bar as they entered, in deep conversation.

Jim, on seeing who his customers were, walked to the center of the bar and asked them if they would not have something to drink with him.

The detective replied that they had just stepped in for a cigar.

"Very well, gentlemen, have what you like."

Handing a box of fine cigars over the bar, they selected one each. At this moment the soldier's filed in.

The detective gave one bound over the bar, seizing Jim Blakely by the throat, saying as he did so:

"Jim Blakely, you are my prisoner!"

Major Parsons threw his mountain of flesh on Shag Andrews, who was soon choked in the powerful grip of the major.

The detective, after choking Blakely nearly to death's door, snapped the bracelets on his wrists, then going to the relief of the major he quietly served Shag Andrews in the same manner.

So quick did it all happen that everyone in the place was taken completely by surprise.

The soldiers forming a solid square around the combatants, blocked any game at a release, if any was entertained.

The prisoners were lifted to their feet by the detective and the major and placed in charge of the captain.

The detective then mounted a table and in a loud voice said:

"Gentlemen, I want you all to withdraw from here as quietly as possible, without recourse to trouble."

"By what right do you come here and make this order?" replied one of the dealers of faro.

"By right and might of the U. S. Government, whom I am serving," replied the detective.

"Very well, we obey."

Blakely, now regaining his former bravado, said:

"Friends, you will not go away and leave us in the hands of these men?"

Not one of them lifted up a voice in the behalf of Blakely and Andrews.

The U. S. Government was too strong and acted as a charm to most of them, who feared for themselves.

He again spoke up:

"Of what am I charged with, you will gratify me this much?"

"You are charged with dealing in counterfeit money and illicit whisky!"

"It's a lie! the proof, the proof!"

"Is now in your cellar!"

Jim Blakely's cheeks blanched at the detective's random shot. He had struck the nail fairly on the head.

Shag Andrews now for the first time spoke up.

"Jim Blakely! I told you so!"

"Oh, the —, you are always telling me so."

The detective now said:

"Gentlemen, now file out. I must close this ranch in the name of the U. S. Government."

The crowd now filed out, and the prisoners led off under guard of the soldiers and placed with the chain gang.

The detective, after seeing that every door and window was locked and bolted, wrote on a slip of paper and pinned it on the front door. The paper read:

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:—This place has been seized by the U. S. Government. Jim Blakely and his pardner, Shag Andrew, are now in the hands of government officials. So endeth the ways of all evil doers. Sooner or later they will get to the end of their rope. Let all others take warning by the fate that awaits the prisoners.

WILLIAM CRAWFORD,
U. S. Secret Service Detective.

CHAPTER XLVIII

FATHER AND DAUGHTER REUNITED

While the events narrated in the preceding chapter were taking place, a joyful meeting between father and child also took place at the Planter's Hotel, and within sight of the manacled outlaws in the public square opposite the hotel.

When the cavalcade reached Baxter Springs, Maud was taken to her father's apartment by Arthur Blackwell, while the friends awaited below in the office of the hotel until after the meeting between Colonel Blackstone and his child was over.

We shall not attempt to describe this meeting of father and child, which lasted for nearly an hour; but suffice it to say that everything was explained to the entire satisfaction of the colonel.

When the friends were ushered into the presence of Colonel Blackstone by Arthur Blackwell, they found Maud still clasped to the colonel's breast.

Congratulations were now in order and the colonel met the friends with a beaming and contented smile.

Major Parsons and William Crawford were presented to the colonel by Arthur, for the first time.

Maud had in her first meeting with her father, recounted to him the share that each had taken in her

release and their share in the awful carnage in the cavern that morning with the robbers.

After their presentation, Crawford, the detective, and Major Parsons begged to be excused as they had business of importance, and withdrew, leaving the friends alone talking over the late adventure.

After the detective and Major Parsons had done up their business, which was the arrest of Jim Blakely and his partner, Shag Andrews, and the seizure of the gambling house, the detective stationed a guard on the premises, and he, in company with the major, adjourned to the railroad station where they were busily engaged for some time sending off and receiving dispatches.

After their business was attended to they again went to the apartment of Colonel Blackstone.

On being ushered in, they found the friends together, and on their entering Colonel Blackstone said:

"Ah! friends, we are glad you have come to help us make out what seems to me a difficult problem.

"We were talking up our departure from here on your arrival and perhaps, with the addition of your wise counsels, we can convince our young friends that my propositions are for their welfare.

"Only one conclusion has thus far been arrived at, and in this all my young friends are unanimous, and that is that we depart from here to-night for Dallas.

"The Prierly's would never forgive me if I should return east without first visiting them that they might welcome their niece and cousin, Maud.

"Now, the knotty problem of which I mentioned, and of which Maud and myself are anxious that you, Mr. Crawford, will lend us your aid, and by your advice and counsel, have Miss Julia, there, see that it is for her interest to accept."

"Colonel, I can best judge after I have heard your intentions toward Miss Julia, or rather Mrs. Larkin, for I am sure they must be good else you would not propose anything."

"We have tried to persuade Mrs. Larkin to accompany us to our home, where she can have all the comforts becoming her sex and where she will have protection in future.

"This proposition she has refused, and I made another, and that is, that she be placed under the protection of a widowed sister now living a secluded life at Washington. This latter is more favorable to her, and only needs your sanction, as she depends implicitly on your advice in the matter."

"Mr. Blackstone, nothing would give me more pleasure than to see Mrs. Larkin installed in the home of your sister under whose protection she would be out of the rude and displeasing stare of a curious public. I certainly would advise Mrs. Larkin to accept your kind offer."

On the advice of the detective, Julia accepted the proposition of the colonel and Maud. This point settled the colonel again called the persuasions of the major and detective to aid him in a pet scheme regarding the scout and Hugh, who were for the first time stubborn.

"I want these two friends," indicating the scout and Hugh, "to go with me and leave this wild life and settle down in contentment with a comfortable income at their command, but this they will not hear to."

All the persuasions of Colonel Blackstone and the friends present could not gain a consent from the scout and Hugh to make their home in the East and fore-swear the life they were wedded to.

All that they could get them to promise, was to see them all safely lodged with Mr. Prierly, whom the scout was acquainted with, and of whom he thought considerable.

This settled, the colonel asked the detective when he intended starting with his prisoners.

"I cannot yet say, I am waiting an answer to a dispatch I sent.

"Ah! here it is now," as a messenger boy made his appearance in the doorway bearing several dispatches, two of which he handed to the detective and one to Major Parsons.

The detective read his dispatches and turning to Colonel Blackstone, said:

"Colonel, I can now answer your question. I have here orders to leave on the next train with my prisoners for the capital. In order to do so I must be stirring if I make it, as I have yet to investigate the premises of Jim Blakely & Co., and secure my prisoners on the train chartered for the purpose."

"I have good news, too, my friends," said Major Parsons, holding up his dispatch. "The commander-in-chief pays me the highest compliment one officer

can pay another for the part I took in this affair; thanks to my friend, Mr. Crawford, for whom I shall always entertain the highest regards."

"Thanks are not necessary in your case, Major," said the detective. "You have done your duty faithfully as a servant of the government and the country would be a poor one if it did not recognize a valuable servant."

"Now, friends, I have only two hours in which to do my business in, and I must withdraw and take my leave; if you take the same train as far as Kansas City, I may meet you, if not I will not see you again until you reach the East."

"One moment, Mr. Crawford," said Colonel Blackstone, as the detective was about to withdraw. "Is it necessary to hold the colored woman, called Aunt Hagar, and who has been so kind to my daughter during her imprisonment?"

"No! I only wish her as a witness."

"Will you send her here and I will see that she is taken care of and will be on hand when wanted?"

"Your wish shall be granted. I will see that the negress is brought here."

"Thanks! In regard to this minister, Charles Mordaunt, whom I think has been more sinned against than sinning, from what I can learn, what do you intend to do with him?"

"I must hold him, Colonel Blackstone."

"But could you not release him under bonds?" Think of his family and the blow it would be to them if known."

"Yes, I could place him under bonds. Do not think me hard-hearted, Colonel. I have thought of all this, but still must do my duty."

"I know it, and respect you in it. I will go on his bonds, if you will allow me to, Mr. Crawford."

"Then I will have a justice of the peace make out the necessary papers, and release him."

"Thanks, my friend! Now in regard to Richard Larkin, I make no charge against him and I may assure you that Mr. Prierly will withhold from taking any steps against him."

"In that case his release is assured, for my promise of his immunity in behalf of the government, given to the dying chief will only be a matter of time; but I cannot allow him to be placed under bonds yet, but will hold him until he stands a preliminary examination and until the brigands receive their sentence."

With this last remark the detective, followed by Major Parsons, took his departure.

After the detective and Major Parsons withdrew, Colonel Blackstone said:

"Arthur, I wish you and Robert would go at once and make all the preparations for our departure from here. I wish to leave on the next train, for Dallas. You must all consider yourselves as my guests."

Arthur and Robert left the room, followed by the scout and Hugh Muldoon.

Two hours later we see the friends comfortably seated in a private car on their way to Dallas all with light hearts and future expectations.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER REUNITED 291

In a front caboose were seated the bandits,"guarded by the soldiers and the detective.

The detective never lost sight of his prisoners, only for once during the entire journey to Washington, and that was when he left the car to bid adieu to the friends when their route separated them.

Two months after the prisoners were tried and convicted and sentenced to long terms in the penitentiary.

A few of them were claimed by the State of New York for murder, for which they expiated their crime on the scaffold.

Through the influence of Colonel Blackstone, Richard Larkin and the minister, Charles Mordaunt, were pardoned with a severe rebuke by the chief justice.

The promise Mr. Crawford made to the bandit chief as to Larkin's and Julia's fortune was fulfilled and after the trial Larkin and Julia sailed for France, there to hide themselves in security from those that once knew them.

A letter received by Maud, bearing a foreign postmark, and written by Julia Larkin, a year after the incidents, stated that they were in a little village in the vicinity of gay Paris, but that they rarely ever visited the metropolitan city of the French.

It further said that Richard loved her and that they were, at the time, living a contented life. Richard had entered a business life, and a handsome income

was coming in to them and they were respected and honored by those around them.

A few hints were given in the contents of the letter as to an expected arrival in their midst, and with womanly instinct Maud guessed as to what the expected arrival was.

CHAPTER XLIX

THE INNOCENT DECEPTION OF THE LOVERS

Two months had passed away since Colonel Blackstone and his daughter Maud, and their friends, had installed themselves in the home of the cattle king.

The scout and his companion, Hugh Muldoon, had taken their departure long since, handsomely remembered by the millionaire, Colonel Blackstone.

The young folks, Alice Prierly, Maud, Robert and Arthur, were left alone to themselves.

In leaving the Prierly residence for a walk or a ride Maud and Arthur took the lead, followed by Alice and Robert. When out of sight they changed partners, thus blindfolding the trusting and doting parents.

One day Mr. Prierly and Colonel Blackstone sat in the library conversing on business, when the Cattle King turned the drift of the conversation by asking:

"I suppose the marriage of Mr. Blackwell and your daughter Maud will take place soon after your arrival home?"

"Yes! I think the young folks have about made up their minds to comply to the terms of the wills."

"They will make a splendid match, and they seem to be born for each other. Judging from their manner lately, they seem to be taken up with each other."

"Yes, they certainly do, and a speedy marriage will

make my heart rejoice. By-the-by, young Folsom seems to think a great deal of your daughter Alice."

"I have noticed as much myself."

"Would you refuse your consent to a marriage if called upon by Robert and your daughter?"

"Why should I? He is the soul of honor as you say, and would make my daughter a good husband."

"But he is poor."

"This would make no difference with me. I have enough for both. I would rather see my daughter marry where she has placed her heart, than see her married to a millionaire without love. No, I love my child too well to see her life wrecked."

"Robert need not come to you penniless, for I owe him a debt of gratitude for his assistance in my daughter's cause and my own, that money will not repay, and I intend to settle a good start in life on him, on my return East."

"If I judge Robert Folsom rightly, he would refuse anything for his services."

"You have judged him rightly. He has already refused my advances in this direction at the time of my misfortune in the train disaster."

"Then you may rest assured that he would still refuse any offer you may make him in this direction."

"But he might change his mind in a love affair."

"I think not."

"He would not want to come to you penniless and ask your daughter's hand."

"With money, or without, if he does, and they both love each other, I will gladly give my consent."

"Spoken like a man, and I fear I would do the same if called upon, for I think a great deal of this young man and take an interest in his welfare."

"You will not be called upon, for your daughter Maud's marriage is already assured to Arthur Blackwell."

"Yes, even so, but I would like to see a double wedding come off."

"Ah! you are getting to be as bad as the women-folk, Colonel, at matchmaking."

Mrs. Prierly made her appearance in the library all smiles and dimples.

She said:

"Husband and Brother, the dear children would like to see you both on a matter deeply concerning their welfare."

"Tell them to come right in," said both in the same breath.

When Mrs. Prierly left the library both men looked at each other in a knowing way.

Mr. Prierly said:

"Colonel, let us make our childrens' heart light, and let joy resound throughout the whole house to-day."

"I am more than willing that the young folks should be made happy and I will place no stumbling block in their way by any words of mine. My long-cherished wish is soon to be realized at last and the thought makes me the happiest mortal living."

"Although not having the same length of time for thought over my daughter's welfare as yourself,

Colonel, I am still young enough to appreciate the choice of my daughter."

Did but Colonel Blackstone know of the import of what was to take place in the next few minutes, he would not have so readily consented to an interview with the children.

He never dreamed otherwise but that Maud had at last consented to become Arthur's wife.

Thinking that Arthur and Maud were coming to ask his consent to their union he thought the wish of his dead friend was now about to be fulfilled and that the two fortunes would be kept in the family.

Little dreaming that his cherished plan was to be knocked to pieces or that he had been duped by the young folks.

Who of us could blame these young folks, knowing, as they did, the obstacles that were placed in their path.

They only fought Colonel Blackstone by a little deception, knowing it to be their only hope.

Of course Arthur and Alice only need gain the consent of Mr. Prierly, to their union, as by Maud's marriage to Robert he was left free to choose whom he might for a wife, and also, by this marriage of Maud and Robert, by the wills of both parents, the large fortune of his father and that of Colonel Blackstone, should revert to Arthur on the Colonel's death.

Arthur, aware of all this, as was also the four lovers, they put their heads together to outwit Colonel Blackstone as the sequel will show.

Alice, during Arthur's short stay, learned to love



"We have come for your blessing, Father."

him and only consented to be his wife on the assurance that Maud was already the wife of Robert, thus leaving Arthur free to choose for himself.

Arthur, holding to the promise given to Maud and Robert, that he would assist them in reconciling Colonel Blackstone to their marriage if they would follow his advice and allow him to be leader and counsellor.

They readily consented and at last he hit upon a plan, after he was assured by Alice of her love for him.

Alice admitted to Arthur that the spark of love kindled in the East had never died out of her bosom; but supposing that his marriage with Maud was inevitable, she left for her home still cherishing an unrequited love with her.

Who can speak of the joy it gave her when Arthur proposed to her, and when she learned by him that he was free.

Alice now in the secret they commenced to mature their plans in order to free Maud and Robert from thralldom and free them from a living mockery.

On the day that Mr. Prierly and Colonel Blackstone were talking about them they were pouring out their troubles into the motherly and sympathetic ears of Mrs. Prierly, who, dear old soul that she was, promised her aid and assistance.

She told the young folks that they should unburden themselves to the tyrants and have the matter over with them at once.

Mrs. Prierly told them that Mr. Prierly and the col-

onel were both in the library and that now was the accepted time in which to make a clean breast of it and have the storm over, and that if they were willing she would announce their wish.

So it was decided that Mrs. Prierly should announce their wish for an interview.

Mrs. Prierly was gone but a few minutes when she returned bearing the news that their presence was expected in the library.

"Now, children be brave and do not falter, and believe me you will be joyous before you leave the library."

Arthur now spoke up:

"Alice, do you take Robert's arm while Maud can take mine, and in this way we will beard the lions in their den. I will lead and Robert you follow my instructions of a moment ago."

"I will! Lead on."

In this way they entered the library to learn their fate.

Arthur entering with Maud leaning on his arm and Robert next with Alice, told the fathers that they were not mistaken in their surmises of what was about to be introduced.

Arthur seated Maud near the window, and near her Alice was seated.

"Mr. Prierly and Colonel Blackstone," said Arthur, "Mr. Folsom and myself are here for the purpose of determining our future welfare."

"Speak out, my boys," said the colonel.

Robert came forward and said, addressing himself to Colonel Blackstone:

"Colonel Blackstone, I ask the hand of——"

"Your wish is granted, my dear boy!"

Then turning to Mr. Prierly he said:

"And you, Mr. Prierly?"

"I will bless your union."

Arthur now quickly following up the vantage ground, said:

"I, too, ask the same question of you both."

Both Mr. Prierly and Colonel Blackstone spoke in chorus:

"Arthur, your wish is granted; say no more."

Arthur darted across the room to where Alice was seated, as did also Robert, where Maud was seated.

Arthur leading Alice forward, said:

"Then, gentlemen, as you have given your consent to our union, bless your future children."

Saying which the two couples stood before the two fathers with bowed heads.

Colonel Blackstone turned livid, while great beads of sweat rolled from his brow to the floor. When he did speak it was in the voice of a caged lion:

"Thunder and Mars, I am duped!"

CHAPTER L

COLONEL BLACKSTONE'S FURY—AFTERWARDS FORGIVENESS

"Thunder and Mars, I have been duped!" said Colonel Blackstone.

"Yes, Colonel, we have both been disappointed in our calculations, so give in with good grace."

"Never!"

"You gave your consent, you surely will not retract?"

"I did not give my consent to the marriage of Maud to Folsom, I thought he was asking the hand of Alice instead of Maud, and knowing that your mind was made up and thinking in his hurry and confusion he had addressed me instead of you, I consented."

"But you consented, Colonel. You did not even give the young men time to explain themselves, so you have yourself to blame."

"I never will consent to this marriage."

"What has changed your opinion of a few minutes ago?"

"At that time I did not expect this."

Arthur now interrupted the two fathers by saying:

"Colonel Blackstone, we practiced an innocent deception on you, in order to obtain your consent, for which we hope to be forgiven."

"Say no more, I will not listen to it."

"But you must hear me out. We have come to explain our position in the matter, and we will.

"You well know that your daughter Maud has been averse to my suit ever since she came back from the seminary. There was a time when I did hold thoughts of making her my wife.

"This school boy love of mine for Maud was dispelled when my intended bride, Alice, was first thrown on my vision. From that moment I loved Alice with a deeper and tenderer love than I ever entertained for Maud.

Knowing of the contract between my father and yourself I was powerless to act. But I vowed to myself I would break my bondage.

"That bondage was broken a short time ago by the secret marriage of your daughter to Robert Folsom."

"Maud a wife! Impossible!"

"But it is nevertheless true, and we are here to substantiate what I say with the proof of their marriage."

"I must be dreaming," said the colonel.

"You are not dreaming, and if you will read this paper you will see that I speak the truth."

Arthur handed the marriage certificate to Colonel Blackstone, whose face on reading it, turned to a livid palor.

"About a week ago I first learned of Robert's marriage to your daughter. You may well imagine my surprise and joy when I learned of it.

"It left me free to choose for myself, and this is my choice, and with Mr. Prierly's consent, I will make her my wife."

Arthur placed his arm around the waist of Alice and awaited Mr. Prierly's answer.

My children, you have my free consent to your union and may God bless it as I do now."

Colonel Blackstone looked on without offering to say a word. Robert now spoke up:

"Colonel Blackstone! have you no word for your daughter who kneels at your feet supplicating your forgiveness?"

Robert's voice aroused Colonel Blackstone.

"How can I speak kindly to her or you, Robert Folsom, when you have, by this marriage, beggared my daughter."

"You have robbed her of her just inheritance, sir!"

"Not so, Colonel Blackstone," replied Arthur. I waive all right that I may have to Maud's fortune by the terms of the contract. I thus destroy all claim."

Taking a paper from his pocket he handed it to Mr. Prierly, saying:

"Read this paper, Mr. Prierly, to all present, and then cast it on yonder coals."

Mr. Prierly read the contract belonging to Arthur made by his father and Colonel Blackstone, then stepping over to the fireplace they all watched it while it was being consumed.

After the contract had burned to ashes, Arthur said:

"Now, Colonel Blackstone, you hold the only document that would deprive your daughter of her just inheritance. Will you destroy it as I have just done mine and take your daughter to your heart and forgive

her and her husband for the innocent part they took to outwit a father?"

Saying never a word he raised his daughter from her recumbent position and pressed his lips to her forehead, saying:

"My children, forgive me. Come, Robert, and let me bless you both. I know you are both worthy of each other."

A few minutes after all was joy in the Prierly mansion. All shadows were driven out and nothing but brightness remained.

CONCLUSION

Three months after the incidents of the foregoing chapter, a double wedding took place in the city of Old Norwich, Connecticut.

The elite of both Old and New Norwich turned out to witness the imposing marriage in high life that was to take place at the First Congregational Church.

The month was May and the air was scented with the perfume of flowers as several magnificent carriages with gold mountings drove up to the church steps.

The church choir struck up the wedding march as the brides and grooms were ushered into the church and up to the altar.

The brides were Maud Blackstone and Alice Prierly.

Need we tell who were the grooms? Perhaps we had better, for some of our readers might think it strange in seeing Maud at the altar, knowing that she had been a wife.

The grooms were Robert Folsom and Arthur Blackwell.

Colonel and Mrs. Blackstone and Mr. and Mrs. Prierly prevailed on Robert and Maud to have their marriage solemnized over again and befitting her rank, but mainly to dispell any ugly rumors that might arise.

The same minister that bound their young hearts

together was now chosen to perform the double ceremony.

After the marriage vows were spoken and after congratulations of friends were over with, the bridal party were driven to the depot on their way to Europe, where they intended spending their honeymoon.

Before Robert's departure for Europe he called upon his kind employer, Mr. Perkins, for the purpose of paying him the money he had loaned him when he started to seek Maud after being spirited away by the bandits.

Mr. Perkins sat in the office with his head cast down as if in trouble. On recognizing Robert, the kind good man jumped from his chair and grasped Robert's hand, exclaiming:

"Ah! my boy, glad to see you back! Did you have good success?"

"Yes! my generous friend, and I have come to pay you the money back that you loaned me, together with the interest. Here is a check for one thousand dollars with my sincere good wishes for your welfare"

He was on the point of withdrawing when a bank collector stepped into the office, and opening the conversation said:

"Ah! glad to find you in, Mr. Perkins. Can you pay this note to-day?"

"I am sorry to disappoint you again, but the truth is, I am unable to raise the amount at present. Perhaps in a few days I will be able to discharge the obligation."

"This is the last day, Mr. Perkins and the bank will have to foreclose, if not paid in the next few hours."

Robert left the office and repaired to the bank, of which he himself was a depositor. Going to the president he said:

"Mr. Jewett, how much is Mr. Perkins indebted to your bank?"

"Only a small matter of ten thousand dollars! I think Mr. Perkins is financially embarrassed since his partner withdrew."

"I will cancel this debt."

"What! are you going crazy?"

"No! I am only relieving the only friend I had when I needed a friend."

"If you wish you can wait here for the return of the collector. I am waiting his return myself in order to know what steps I would have to take in the matter. You have done a noble act, Mr. Folsom, and saved an honest man from ruin."

The collector made his appearance and had commenced to make his report, when the president told him to desist and to hand him the note.

Robert wrote a check for the face of the note and the president handed them both to the collector and bade him to give them to the cashier and have him cancel the note.

Robert then wrote another check and when the collector came back with the canceled note he placed them both in a sealed envelope, together with a slip of paper. He then wrote the address of his former

employer on the envelope, then turning to Mr. Jewett, he said:

"I have enclosed a check for ten thousand dollars, also the canceled note. I wish you would deliver this in person as soon as possible to Mr. Perkins."

"I will do it!"

Robert took his departure from the bank, followed soon by the bank president. A few minutes after the president was standing before Mr. Perkins.

"I have a pleasant duty to perform, Mr. Perkins."

"Say rather an unpleasant duty and not mock my distress, Mr. Jewett."

"I say I have a pleasant duty to perform, and here it is," handing over the sealed packet.

With nervous fingers Mr. Perkins tore open the sealed envelope. The canceled note and the check for ten thousand dollars met his gaze.

"Who has——?"

"Read the note. Perhaps it will explain." The note ran thus:

"My kindest regards to the only friend I had when I needed one.

"ROBERT FOLSOM."

"God bless the boy," said Mr. Perkins.

THE END

TRAVELS OF A VENTRILOQUIST

By RAY. R. JOHNSTON

THOSE who read this book should leave off their mourning for it will cause the most somber face to break out in smiles.

Each chapter pulses with power, often rough and reckless in expression, but invariably conveying the effect intended, to bring you out of your despondency and into the full sunlight of a much brighter and glorious world.

TRAVELS OF A VENTRILOQUIST, is a distinct advance upon character lines of surprising strength and almost violent originality, the glorious swish and swing of each chapter throughout the book are brimful of humor in increased measure.

Each one of the stories contained in this book bears the imprint of a master who conjures up incident after incident as if by magic, and **Mr. Johnston** portrays character-sketching and scenery with a feeling and an ease which is only exceeded by the boldness of force.

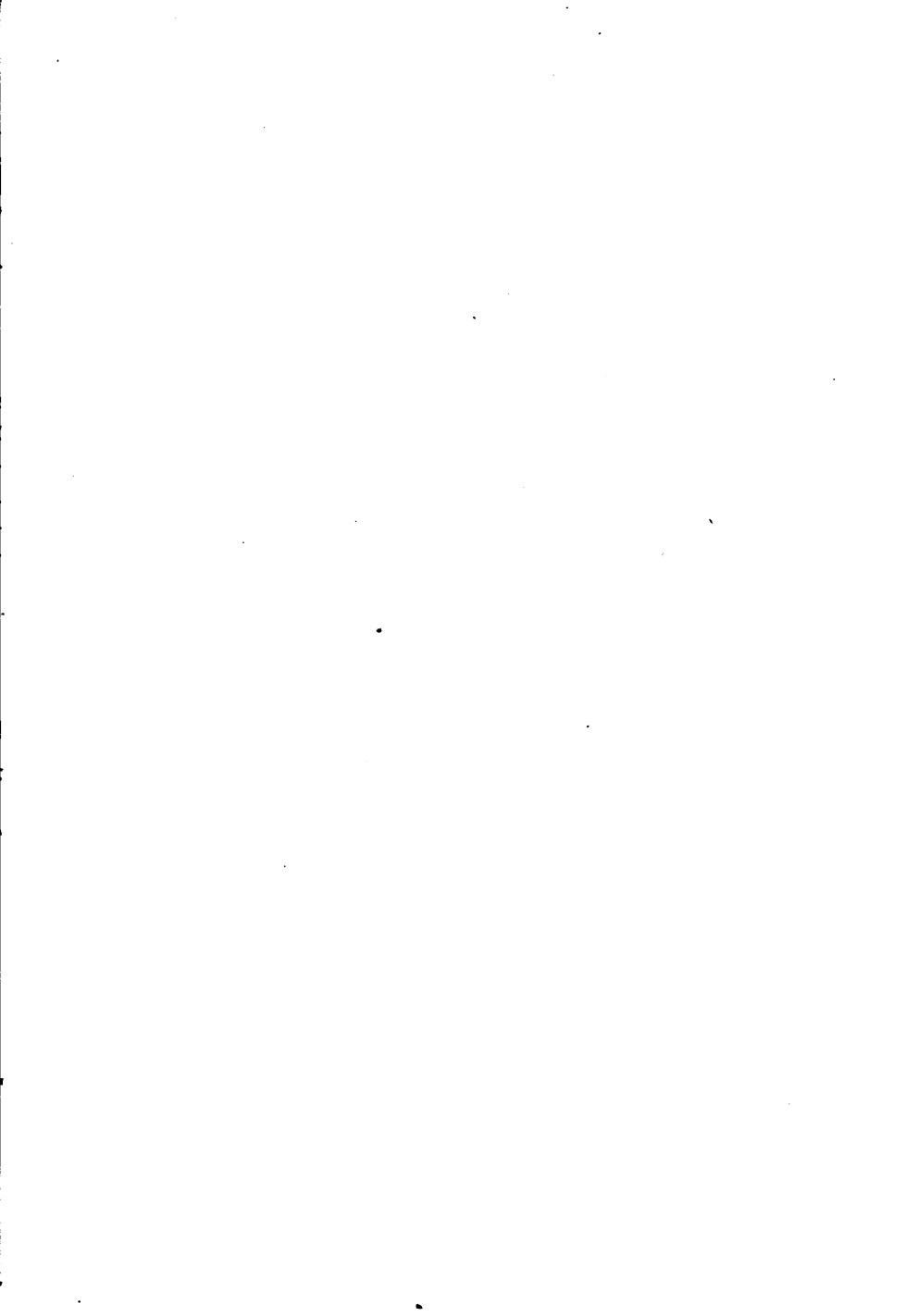
Mr. Johnston's powers as a story-teller are evidently not diminishing as his imaginative resources are herein portrayed in a most elaborate, entertaining and fluent manner.

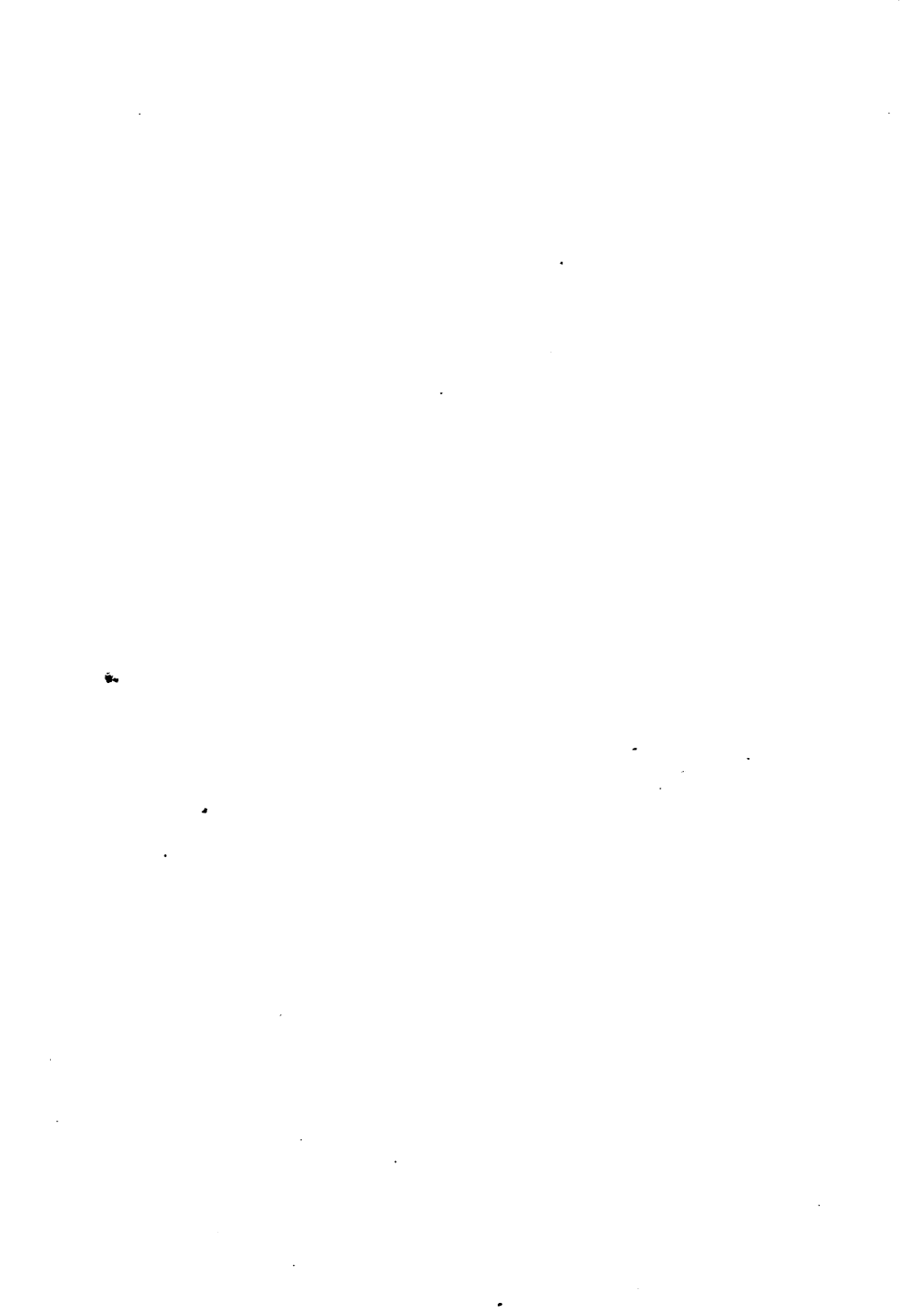
We advise everybody to read **TRAVELS OF A VENTRILOQUIST**, and profit by some of the best entertaining incidents that modern story-telling has to offer. From the first chapter to the last, interest in the book never wanes; one finds it difficult to interrupt the narrative with breathing space. It whirls with excitement and strange adventure bordering on the supernatural.

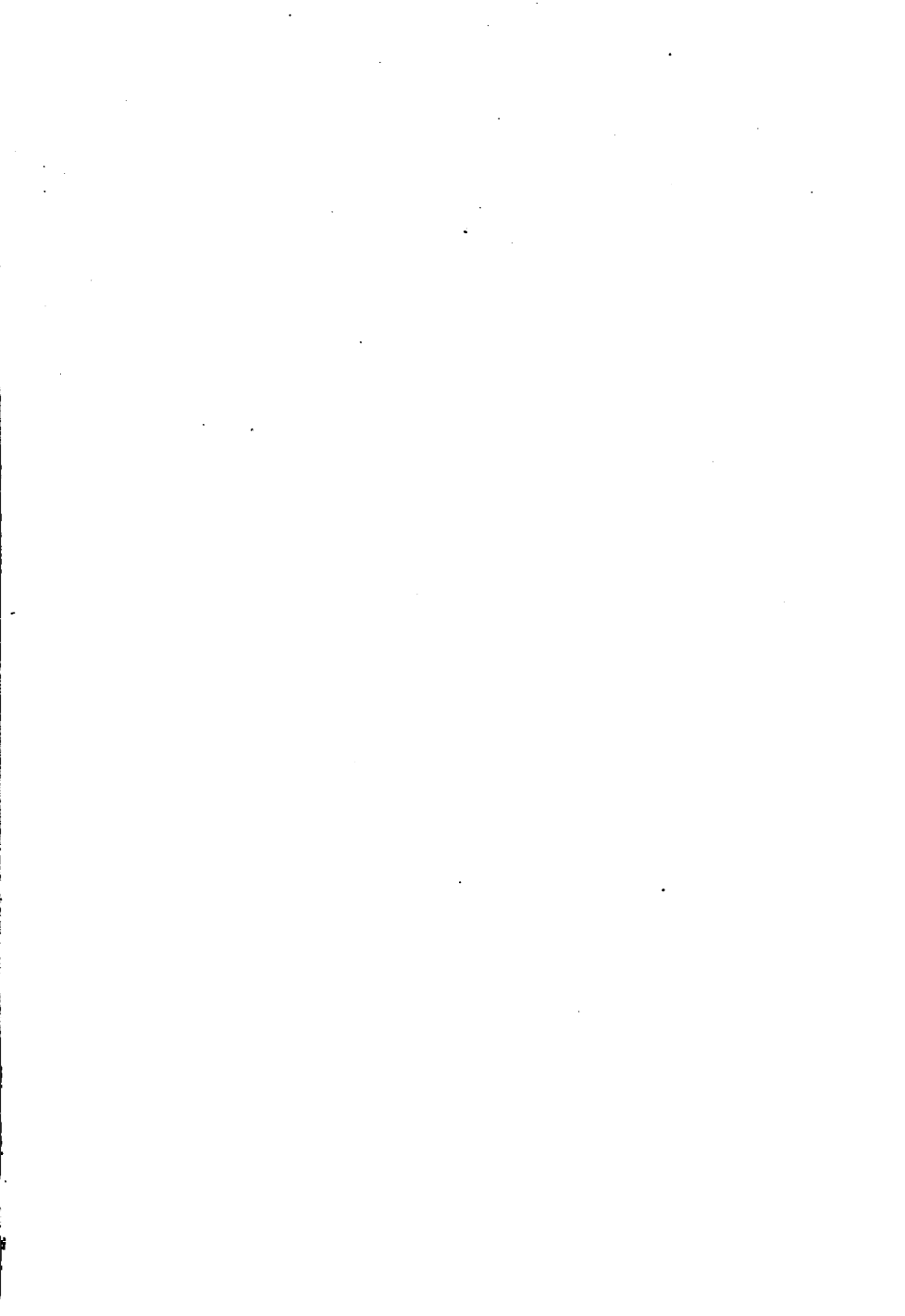
All of the scenes depicted in **TRAVELS OF A VENTRILOQUIST** do homage to the genius of **Mr. Johnston**, and make this humorous pen-sketching one of the books of the year.

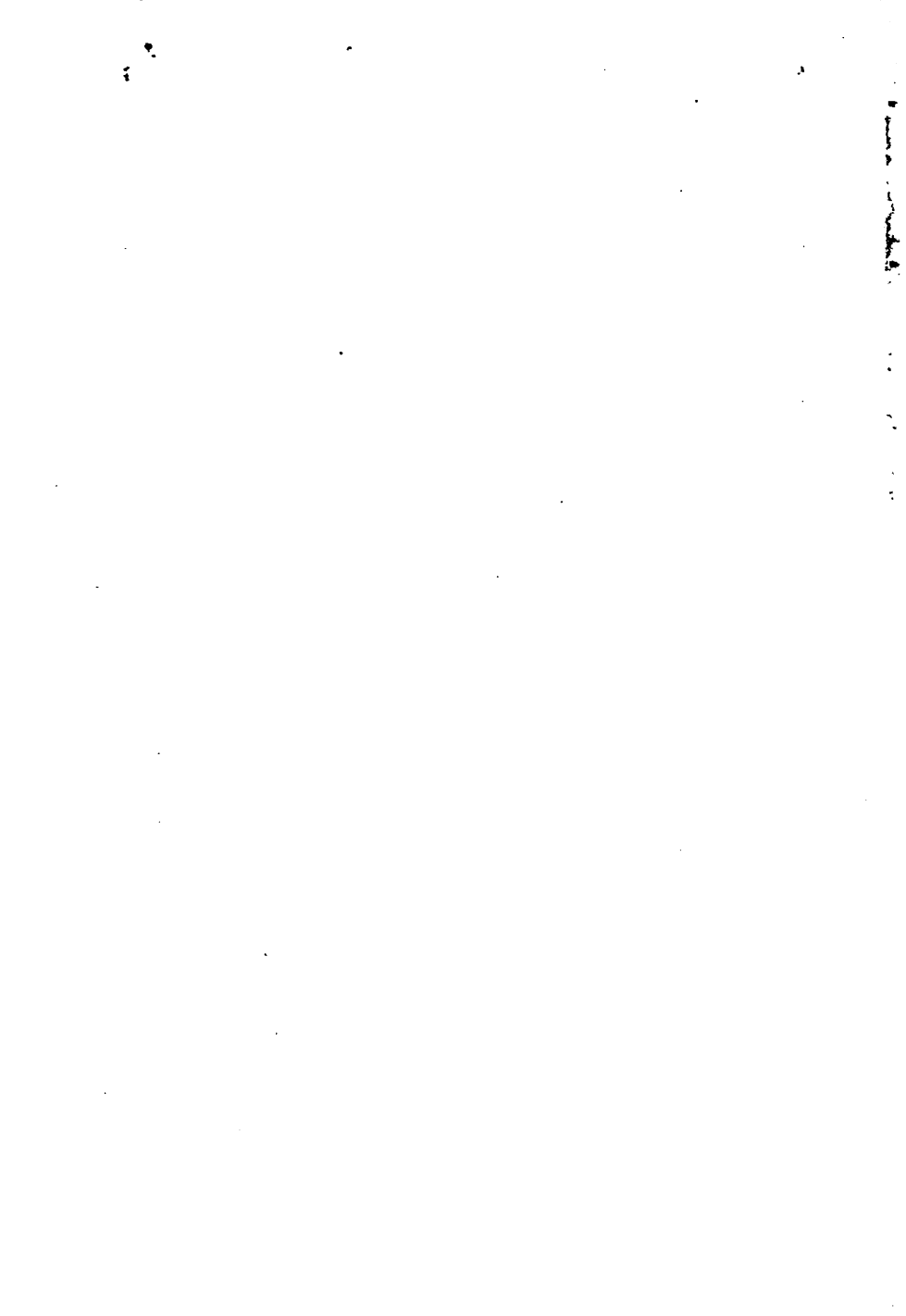
Every chapter contains a complete story of interest to the general reader and in it is found a fund of sparkling wit and humor from beginning to end.

Price (Paper Covered), 25 cts.









THE BORROWER WILL BE CHARGED
THE COST OF OVERDUE NOTIFICATION
IF THIS BOOK IS NOT RETURNED TO
THE LIBRARY ON OR BEFORE THE LAST
DATE STAMPED BELOW.

BOOK DUE WITH

JAN 1978

58

CANCELLED

MARCH 1978

53

AL 2165.3.101
Maude Blackstone,
Widener Library

005482303



3 2044 080 914 708